This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

US 4568.35
c

Harvard College Library

FROM THE
FRANCIS PARKMAN
MEMORIAL FUND
FOR
CANADIAN HISTORY
ESTABLISHED IN 1908

THE WRITINGS

OF

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

VOL. IX.

381
54-13
26-8

THE

WRITINGS

OF

GEORGE WASHINGTON;

BEING HIS

CORRESPONDENCE, ADDRESSES, MESSAGES, AND OTHER PAPERS, OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE,

SELECTED AND PUBLISHED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS;

WITH

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

NOTES, AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

By JARED SPARKS.

VOLUME IX.

BOSTON:
RUSSELL, ODIORNE, AND METCALF,
AND
HILLIARD, GRAY, AND CO.
1835.

Parkman 16.23
6322.30
US 4568.38
.35
Harvard College Library
Bequest of
FRANCIS PARKMAN
17 Jan. 1894

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-five, by JARED SPARKS, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

CAMBRIDGE:
CHARLES FOLSOM, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY.

PART THIRD;

CONTAINING

CORRESPONDENCE

FROM THE TIME

OF RESIGNING HIS COMMISSION AS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMY,

TO THAT OF HIS INAUGURATION AS

PRESIDENT.

PRIVATE LETTERS

AFTER THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

TO GOVERNOR CLINTON.

Mount Vernon, 28 December, 1783.

MY DEAR SIR,

After as prosperous a journey as could be expected at this late season of the year, I arrived at my seat the day before Christmas, having previously divested myself of my official character. I am now a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac, where I should be happy to see you, if your public business would ever permit, and where, in the mean time, I shall fondly cherish the remembrance of all your former friendship.

Although I scarcely need tell you, how much I have been satisfied with every instance of your public conduct, yet I could not suffer Colonel Walker (whose merits are too well known to you to need a recommendation of him from me, if any thing should cast up favorable to his wishes,) to depart for New York, without giving your Excellency one more testimony of the obligations I consider myself under for the spirited and able assistance, which I have often derived from the State under your administration.

The scene is at last closed. I feel myself eased of a load of public care. I hope to spend the remainder

of my days in cultivating the affections of good men, and in the practice of the domestic virtues. Permit me still to consider you in the number of my friends, and to wish you every felicity.

Mrs. Washington joins me in presenting the compliments of the season, with our best respects, to Mrs. Clinton and the family. I have the honor to be, &c.

TO RICHARD VARICK.

Mount Vernon, 1 January, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

From the moment I left the city of New York, until my arrival at this place, I have been so much occupied by a variety of concerns, that I could not find leisure to acknowledge the receipt of your two favors of the 4th and 7th ultimo.

The public and other papers, which were committed to your charge, and the books in which they have been recorded under your inspection, having come safe to hand, I take this first opportunity of signifying my entire approbation of the manner in which you have executed the important duties of recording secretary, and the satisfaction I feel in having my papers so properly arranged, and so correctly recorded; and I beg you will accept my thanks for the care and attention, which you have given to this business. I am fully convinced, that neither the present age nor posterity will consider the time and labor, which have been employed in accomplishing it, unprofitably spent.

I beg you will be persuaded, that I shall take a pleasure in asserting on every occasion the sense I entertain of the fidelity, skill, and indefatigable industry manifested by you in the performance of your pub-

lic duties, and that I am, with sentiments of esteem and regard, dear Sir, &c.*

TO THE SUPERINTENDENT OF FINANCE.

Mount Vernon 4 January, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

Herewith I give you the trouble of receiving the account of my expenditures in Philadelphia, and on my journey home. If I recollect right, Colonel Cobb told me this was the mode you had suggested to him, as proper for my proceeding in this matter.

Equally unexpected by them, as it appeared just in my eye to do it, I have given my late aids, who attended me from the seat of my military command, one hundred dollars each to bear their expenses home. I could not think it reasonable, that, from their attachment to me, or from motives of etiquette, they should incur this charge themselves. Their finances, I well knew, were unable to bear it, although I had some difficulty to prevail on them to accept this aid. Cobb I would not suffer (on account of his domestic and other concerns) to proceed any further than Philadelphia with me, but his distance from thence home would be equal to that of the other gentlemen from this place.

---

* In the month of May, 1781, General Washington made arrangements, by authority of Congress, to have all his official papers recorded in volumes. He appointed Colonel Richard Varick to superintend this work, to classify the papers according to a plan furnished by General Washington himself, and to engage such a number of copyists as he should deem expedient. It was an undertaking not less laborious than confidential and important. Colonel Varick was employed, with three or four assistants, two years and a half in executing it. The papers were not only classified and arranged with exactness of method, but were transcribed throughout in a fair, large, and distinct hand.

All stand, therefore, upon an equal footing in my allowance.

I cannot close this letter without a renewal of those sentiments of friendship and regard, which I have always felt and professed for you; nor without such expressions of my sensibility, as result from a susceptible mind, for the many instances of polite attention and civility, which I have received from Mrs. Morris and yourself, particularly during my late stay in Philadelphia. I flatter myself it is unnecessary to repeat the assurances of the pleasure it would give Mrs. Washington and me, to see you and Mrs. Morris at this retreat from my public cares; and yet, if I obey the dictates of my inclination and wishes, I must do it. My best wishes and respectful compliments, in which Mrs. Washington joins me, are offered to you both; and with sincere affection, I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO JONATHAN TRUMBULL, JUNIOR.

Mount Vernon, 5 January, 1784.

Dear Trumbull,

Your obliging letter of the 15th of November did not reach me until some days after we had taken possession of the city of New York. The scene, that followed, of festivity, congratulation, addresses, and resignation, must be my apology for not replying to it sooner.

I sincerely thank you for the copy of the address of Governor Trumbull to the General Assembly and freemen of your State.* The sentiments contained in

* An address of Governor Trumbull to the Assembly of Connecticut, in October, 1783, declining a reëlection. He was then in the seventy-third year of his age, and had been governor of Connecticut fourteen years.

it are such, as would do honor to a patriot of any age or nation; at least they are too coincident with my own, not to meet with my warmest approbation. Be so good as to present my most cordial respects to the Governor, and let him know, that it is my wish, that the mutual friendship and esteem, which have been planted and fostered in the tumult of public life, may not wither and die in the serenity of retirement. Tell him, that we should rather amuse our evening hours of life in cultivating the tender plants, and bringing them to perfection, before they are transplanted to a happier clime.

Notwithstanding the jealous and contracted temper, which seems to prevail in some of the States, yet I cannot but hope and believe, that the good sense of the people will ultimately get the better of their prejudices; and that order and sound policy, though they do not come so often as one would wish, will be produced from the present unsettled and deranged state of public affairs. Indeed, I am happy to observe, that the political disposition is actually meliorating every day. Several of the States have manifested an inclination to invest Congress with more ample powers; most of the legislatures appear disposed to do perfect justice; and the Assembly of this commonwealth have just complied with the requisitions of Congress, and, I am informed, without a dissenting voice. Every thing, my dear Trumbull, will come right at last, as we have often prophesied. My only fear is, that we shall lose a little reputation first.*

* Some parts of Governor Trumbull's address had not been acceptable to the majority of the legislature. He had spoken of the necessity of enlarging the powers of Congress, and of strengthening the arm of government. The following is a paragraph of the reply reported by a committee of the General Assembly, which was rejected by the lower house.

"That the secretary request of his Excellency a copy of his address,

After having passed, with as much prosperity as could be expected, through the career of public life, I have now reached the goal of domestic enjoyment; in which state, I assure you, I find your good wishes most acceptable to me. The family at Mount Vernon joins in the compliments and cordiality, with which

I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO DAVID HUMPHREYS.

Mount Vernon, 14 January, 1784.

My dear Humphreys,

I have been favored with your letter of the 16th. Be assured that there are few things, which would give me more pleasure than opportunities of evincing to you the sincerity of my friendship, and disposition to render you services at any time when it may be in my power.

Although all recommendations from me to Congress must now be considered as coming from a private character, yet I enter very cheerfully into your views; and, as far as my suggesting of them to that honorable body,

---

that it may be published, which this Assembly are especially desirous of, as they consider those important principles of justice, benevolence, and subordination to law, therein inculcated, as constituting the only solid basis upon which social happiness can be established, and therefore deserving the serious attention of the good people of the State."

Upon this paragraph Mr. Trumbull remarked in his letter to General Washington; "It was rejected, lest, by adopting it, they should seem to convey to the people an idea of their concurring with the political sentiments contained in the address; so exceedingly jealous is the spirit of this State at present respecting the powers and the engagements of Congress, arising principally from their aversion to the half-pay and commutation granted to the army; principally I say arising from this cause. It is but too true, that some few are wicked enough to hope, that, by means of this clamor, they may be able to rid themselves of the whole public debt, by introducing so much confusion into public measures, as shall eventually produce a general abolition of the whole."—*MS. Letter, November 15th*, 1783.

accompanied by my testimonial of your competency to the execution of the duties of either of the offices in contemplation, will go, you have them freely; and the enclosed letter, which is a copy of the one I have written to Congress on the occasion, will be an evidence of my good wishes, whatever may be the success.

I cannot take my leave of you without offering those acknowledgments of your long and zealous services to the public, which your merits justly entitle you to, and which a grateful heart should not withhold; and I feel very sensibly the obligations I am personally under to you, for the aid I have derived from your abilities, for the cheerful assistance you have afforded me upon many interesting occasions, and for the attachment you have always manifested towards me. I shall hold in pleasing remembrance the friendship and intimacy, which have subsisted between us, and shall neglect no opportunity on my part to cultivate and improve them; being with unfeigned esteem and regard, my dear Humphreys, your most affectionate friend, &c.

TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 14 January, 1784.

SIR,

The goodness of Congress in the assurances they were pleased to give me, of charging themselves with the interests of those confidential officers, who had attended me to the resignation of my public employments, and the request of your Excellency to Colonel Humphreys, after I had been honored with my public audience, that, if any thing should occur to him in consequence of what had just been suggested, he would communicate it to you in a letter, induce me to take

the liberty of bringing the wishes of that officer before Congress.

Having devoted the last seven or eight years to the service of his country, he is desirous of continuing in the walk of public life, although he is ignorant, as I also am, of the offices which Congress have to bestow, and may think him competent to. Two openings, however, seem likely to occur, either of which, I am persuaded, he would fill with as much advantage to the public, as reputation to himself. The one is, a regiment, in case a Continental peace establishment should be resolved on; the other, official secretary to an embassy abroad, if new appointments should be made, or a vacancy happen in the old ones.

There is a third office, which I barely hint at, with all possible deference, and with a diffidence which proceeds more from a doubt of the propriety of my suggesting it, than from any question which arises in my mind, of his competency to the duties; and that is, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, if Congress should think it expedient to make another appointment, and should find all those requisites in him, which are necessary to constitute a minister for that department. For his ability, integrity, punctuality, and sobriety, I can fully answer.

If I have gone too far, Congress will please to excuse it, and attribute the error to my wishes to serve a worthy character. I have the honor to be, &c.*

* On the 12th of May following, Colonel Humphreys was chosen secretary to the commission for negotiating treaties of commerce with foreign powers.

TO EDWARD HAND.

Mount Vernon, 14 January, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

When I left Philadelphia, I hoped to have the pleasure of seeing you in Annapolis before my departure from thence, and to have an opportunity, previous to my resignation, of expressing to you personally, among the last acts of my official life, my entire approbation of your public conduct, particularly in the execution of the important duties of adjutant-general.

Notwithstanding I have been disappointed in that expectation, and have it now in my power, only as a private character, to make known my sentiments and feelings respecting my military friends; yet I cannot decline making use of the first occasion, after my retirement, of informing you, my dear Sir, how much reason I have had to be satisfied with the great zeal, attention, and ability manifested by you in conducting the business of your department; and how happy I should be in opportunities of demonstrating my sincere regard and esteem for you. It is unnecessary, I hope, to add with what pleasure I should see you at this place, being, dear Sir, &c.

TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 14 January, 1784.

SIR,

I have had the pleasure to receive your letter of the 28th ultimo by Mr. Godin, and beg your Excellency to be persuaded, that I shall always be happy in opportunities of showing every suitable attention to foreigners

and gentlemen of such distinction, as those you did me the honor to introduce to my acquaintance.

I am truly sensible, Sir, that the extract from the instructions of the executive of Pennsylvania to their delegates contains another most flattering proof of the favorable opinion they are pleased to entertain of my past services. Every repeated mark of the approbation of my fellow citizens, especially of those invested with so dignified an appointment, demands my particular acknowledgment. Under this impression, I cannot but feel the greatest obligations to the Supreme Executive Council of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. But, as my sentiments on the subject of their instructions have been long and well known to the public, I need not repeat them to your Excellency on the present occasion.

I have therefore only to add, that Mrs. Washington joins me in presenting our best compliments to Mrs. Mifflin, and that I have the honor to be, &c.*

---

* The instructions of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania to the delegates in Congress from that State contained the following clause.

"Though his Excellency General Washington proposes in a short time to retire, yet his illustrious actions and virtues render his character so splendid and venerable, that, it is highly probable, the admiration and esteem of the world may make his life in a very considerable degree public, as numbers will be desirous of seeing the great and good man, who has so eminently contributed to the happiness of a nation. His very services to his country may therefore subject him to expenses, unless he permits her gratitude to interpose.

"We are perfectly acquainted with the disinterestedness and generosity of his soul. He thinks himself amply *rewarded* for all his labors and cares, by the love and prosperity of his fellow citizens. It is true, no rewards they can bestow can be equal to his merits. But they ought not to suffer those merits to be burthensome to him. We are convinced that the people of Pennsylvania would regret such a consequence.

"We are aware of the delicacy, with which this subject must be treated. But relying upon the good sense of Congress, we wish it may engage their early attention." — *December 16th*, 1783.

As one of the delegates from Pennsylvania, President Mifflin forwarded

TO BENJAMIN HARRISON, GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA.

Mount Vernon, 18 January, 1784.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have just had the pleasure to receive your letter of the 8th. For the friendly and affectionate terms, in which you have welcomed my return to this country and to private life, and for the favorable light in which you are pleased to consider and express your sense of my past services, you have my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments.

That the prospect before us is, as you justly observe, fair, none can deny; but what use we shall make of it is exceedingly problematical; not but that I believe all things will come right at last, but like a young heir, come a little prematurely to a large inheritance, we shall wanton and run riot until we have brought our reputation to the brink of ruin, and then like him shall have to labor with the current of opinion, when compelled perhaps to do what prudence and common policy pointed out, as plain as any problem in Euclid, in the first instance.

The disinclination of the individual States to yield competent powers to Congress for the federal government, their unreasonable jealousy of that body and of one another, and the disposition, which seems to pervade each, of being all-wise and all-powerful within itself, will, if there is not a change in the system, be

---

this paper to General Washington. The brief reply in the above letter prevented its being laid before Congress. That reply, indeed, was accordant with his principles and determination, made known when he received his commission in the army. It was then his fixed purpose to receive no compensation from his country for his services. To this resolution he rigidly adhered, never exhibiting any other claims, than the simple amount of his expenses while he held his commission and was in actual employment.

our downfall as a nation. This is as clear to me as A, B, C; and I think we have opposed Great Britain, and have arrived at the present state of peace and independency, to very little purpose, if we cannot conquer our own prejudices. The powers of Europe begin to see this, and our newly acquired friends, the British, are already and professedly acting upon this ground; and wisely too, if we are determined to persevere in our folly. They know that individual opposition to their measures is futile, and boast that we are not sufficiently united as a nation to give a general one! Is not the indignity alone of this declaration, while we are in the very act of peace-making and conciliation, sufficient to stimulate us to vest more extensive and adequate powers in the sovereign of these United States?

For my own part, although I am returned to, and am now mingled with, the class of private citizens, and like them must suffer all the evils of a tyranny, or of too great an extension of federal powers, I have no fears, arising from this source, in my mind; but I have many, and powerful ones indeed, which predict the worst consequences, from a half-starved, limping government, that appears to be always moving upon crutches, and tottering at every step. Men, chosen as the delegates in Congress are, cannot officially be dangerous. They depend upon the breath, nay, they are so much the creatures of the people, under the present constitution, that they can have no views, which could possibly be carried into execution, nor any interests distinct from those of their constituents. My political creed, therefore, is, to be wise in the choice of delegates, support them like gentlemen while they are our representatives, give them competent powers for all federal purposes, support them in the due exercise thereof, and, lastly, compel them to close attendance in Congress

during their delegation. These things, under the present mode and termination of elections, aided by annual instead of constant sessions, would, or I am exceedingly mistaken, make us one of the most wealthy, happy, respectable, and powerful nations, that ever inhabited the terrestrial globe. Without them, we shall, in my opinion, soon be every thing which is the direct reverse.

I shall look for you, in the first part of next month, with such other friends as may incline to accompany you, with great pleasure, being, with best respects to Mrs. Harrison, in which Mrs. Washington joins me,

Dear Sir, &c.

TO THE YANKEE CLUB OF STEWARTSTOWN, IN THE COUNTY OF TYRONE, IRELAND.

Mount Vernon, 20 January, 1784.

GENTLEMEN,

It is with unfeigned satisfaction, that I accept your congratulation on the late happy and glorious revolution.

The generous indignation against the foes to the rights of human nature, with which you seem to be animated, and the exalted sentiments of liberty, which you appear to entertain, are too consonant to the feelings and principles of the citizens of the United States of America, not to attract their veneration and esteem, did not the affectionate and anxious concern, with which you regarded their struggle for freedom and independence, entitle you to their more particular acknowledgments.

If, in the course of our successful contest, any good consequences have resulted to the oppressed kingdom

of Ireland, it will afford a new source of felicitation to all who respect the interests of humanity.

I am now, Gentlemen, to offer you my best thanks for the indulgent sentiments you are pleased to express of my conduct, and for your benevolent wishes respecting my personal welfare, as well as with regard to a more interesting object, the prosperity of my country. I have the honor to be, with due consideration, &c.

TO THE CHEVALIER JEAN DE HEINTZ.

Mount Vernon, 21 January, 1784.

SIR,

As soon as I had the honor of receiving your letter, containing a proposal of the Order of the Knights of Divine Providence,* I referred the subject of it to the decision of Congress, in my letter to that august body, dated the 28th of August last, a copy of which is enclosed. Whereupon the United States in Congress assembled were pleased to pass their act of the 5th instant, which is properly authenticated by their secretary, and which I have the honor of transmitting herewith.

Notwithstanding it appears to be incompatible with the principles of our national constitution to admit the introduction of any kind of nobility, knighthood, or distinctions of a similar nature, amongst the citizens of our republic, yet I pray you will have the goodness to make known to the Illustrious Knights of the Order

* An order of knighthood, which had recently been instituted in Poland. A proposal had been made to Congress, through General Washington, that they should nominate a number of suitable persons in America to become knights of the order. Congress resolved, that they could not, "consistently with the principles of the confederation," accept the proposal.

of Divine Providence, that we received with the deepest gratitude and most perfect respect this flattering mark of their attention and approbation. For the polite manner in which you have communicated the pleasure of the Order, you will be pleased to accept my best acknowledgments. I have the honor to be, &c.

TO PHILIP SCHUYLER.

Mount Vernon, 21 January, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 20th of December found me, as you conjectured, by that fireside, from which I had been too long absent for my own convenience; to which I returned with the greatest avidity the moment my public avocations would permit; and from which I hope never again to be withdrawn.

While I am here, solacing myself in my retreat from the busy scenes of life, I am not only made extremely happy by the gratitude of my countrymen in general, but particularly so by the repeated proofs of the kindness and approbation of those, who have been more intimately conversant with my public transactions; and I need scarcely add, that the favorable opinion of no one is more acceptable, than that of yourself.

In recollecting the vicissitudes of fortune we have experienced, and the difficulties we have surmounted, I shall always call to mind the great assistance I have frequently received from you, both in your public and private character. May the blessings of peace amply reward your exertions. May you and your family, to whom the compliments of Mrs. Washington and myself are affectionately presented, long continue to enjoy every species of happiness this world can afford,

I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO CHARLES THOMSON, SECRETARY OF CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 22 January, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

The original letter and other papers from the Chevalier de Heintz, respecting the Order of the Knights of Divine Providence, were transmitted to Congress, without a copy being taken. I am at a loss, therefore, in what manner to direct my letter to him; but, if I recollect right, a mode is pointed out for the address by the secretary himself. Let me pray you, therefore, my good Sir, to examine into this matter, and, after giving my letter another cover, put it into the proper channel for conveyance.

If my commission is not necessary for the files of Congress, I should be glad to have it deposited among my own papers. It may serve *my grandchildren*, some fifty or an hundred years hence, for a theme to ruminate upon, if *they* should be contemplatively disposed.

We have been so fast locked up in snow and ice since Christmas, that all kinds of intercourse have been suspended; and a duty which I owed my mother, and intended ere this to have performed, has been forced to yield to the intemperance of the weather; but, as this again must submit to the approaching sun, I shall soon be enabled to discharge that duty for which nature and inclination have a call, and shall be ready to welcome my friends to the shade of this vine and fig-tree, where, I hope it is unnecessary to add, I should be exceedingly happy to see you, and any of *my late masters*, the representatives in Congress. Mrs. Washington, if she knew I was writing to you in this style, would, I am certain, adduce arguments to prove, that I ought to include Mrs. Thomson; but before she could

have half spun the thread of her discourse, it is more than probable I should have nonplused her by yielding readily to the force of her reasoning. With sentiments of sincere regard and esteem,* I am, Sir, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 1 February, 1784.

At length, my dear Marquis, I am become a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac; and under the shadow of my own vine and my own fig-tree, free from the bustle of a camp, and the busy scenes of public life, I am solacing myself with those tranquil enjoyments, of which the soldier, who is ever in pursuit of fame, the statesman, whose watchful days and sleepless nights are spent in devising schemes to promote the welfare of his own, perhaps the ruin of other countries, as if this globe was insufficient for us all, and the courtier, who is always watching the countenance of his prince, in hopes of catching a gracious smile, can have very little conception. I have not only retired from all public employments, but I am re-

* *From Mr. Thomson's Reply.* — "With respect to your *commission*, I have to inform you, that, previous to the receipt of your letter, it had been in agitation among the members to have an order passed for returning it to you in a gold box. A motion has accordingly been made to that effect, which was received with general approbation, and referred to a committee to be drawn up in proper terms. The committee have not yet reported. But I have not the least doubt of its being returned to you in a way, that will be satisfactory; and I heartily wish, that this sacred deposit may be preserved by your *children* and children's children to the latest posterity, and may prove an incentive to them to emulate the virtues of their worthy and great progenitor." — *Annapolis, February 7th.*

This intention it seems was never fulfilled. The original commission was retained, and is deposited in the department of state of the United States.

tiring within myself, and shall be able to view the solitary walk, and tread the paths of private life, with a heartfelt satisfaction. Envious of none, I am determined to be pleased with all; and this, my dear friend, being the order for my march, I will move gently down the stream of life, until I sleep with my fathers.

Except an introductory letter or two, and one countermanding my request respecting plate, I have not written to you since the middle of October by General Duportail. To inform you, at this late hour, that the city of New York was evacuated by the British forces on the 25th of November; that the American troops took possession of it the same day, and delivered it over to the civil authority of the State; that good order, contrary to the expectation and predictions of General Carleton, his officers, and all the loyalists, was immediately established; and that the harbour of New York was finally cleared of the British flag about the 5th or 6th of December, would be an insult to your intelligence. And that I remained eight days in New York after we took possession of the city; that I was very much hurried during that time, which was the reason I did not write to you from thence; that, taking Philadelphia in my way, I was obliged to remain there a week; that at Annapolis, where Congress were then and are now sitting, I did, on the 23d of December present them my commission, and make them my last bow, and on the eve of Christmas entered these doors an older man by near nine years than when I left them, is very uninteresting to any but myself. Since that period, we have been fast locked up in frost and snow, and excluded in a manner from all kinds of intercourse, the winter having been, and still continuing to be, extremely severe.

I have now to acknowledge and thank you for your

favors of the 22d of July and 8th of September, both of which, although the first is of old date, have come to hand since my letter to you of October. The accounts contained therein of the political and commercial state of affairs, as they respect America, are interesting, and I wish I could add, that they are altogether satisfactory. The agency you have had in both, particularly with regard to the free ports in France, is a fresh evidence of your unwearied endeavours to serve this country; but there is no part of your letters to Congress, my dear Marquis, which bespeaks the excellence of your heart more plainly, than that which contains those noble and generous sentiments on the justice, which is due to the faithful friends and servants of the public. But I must do Congress the justice to declare, that, as a body, I believe there is every disposition in them, not only to acknowledge the merits, but to reward the services of the army. There is a contractedness, I am sorry to add, in some of the States, from whence all our difficulties on this head proceed; but it is to be hoped, that the good sense and perseverance of the rest will ultimately prevail, as the spirit of *meanness* is beginning to subside.

From a letter, which I have just received from the governor of this State, I expect him here in a few days, when I shall not be unmindful of what you have written about the bust, and will endeavour to have matters respecting it placed on their proper basis. I thank you most sincerely, my dear Marquis, for your kind invitation to your house, if I should come to Paris. At present I see but little prospect of such a voyage. The deranged situation of my private concerns, occasioned by an absence of almost nine years, and an entire disregard of all private business during that period, will not only suspend, but may put it for ever out of

my power to gratify this wish. This not being the case with you, come with Madame de Lafayette, and view me in my domestic walks. I have often told you, and repeat it again, that no man could receive you in them with more friendship and affection than I should do; in which I am sure Mrs. Washington would cordially join me. We unite in respectful compliments to your lady, and best wishes for your little flock. With every sentiment of esteem, admiration, and love, I am, my dear Marquis, your most affectionate friend.

TO MAJOR-GENERAL KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 20 February, 1784.

My dear Sir,

The bad weather, and the great care which the post-riders take of themselves, prevented your letters of the 3d and 9th of last month from getting to my hands till the 10th of this. My setting off next morning for Fredericksburg to pay my duty to an aged mother, and not returning till yesterday, will be admitted, I hope, as a sufficient apology for my silence until now.

I am much obliged by the trouble you have taken to report the state of the garrison and stores, together with the disposition of the troops at West Point to me; and I think the allowance of rations, or subsistence money, to such officers as could not retire at that inclement season, was not only perfectly humane, but perfectly just also, and that it must appear so to Congress.

It would seem to me, without having recourse to calculation, that the allowance of a major-general in a separate department to the person who shall discharge

the duties of secretary at war, master of ordnance, and commanding officer of the forces, which may be retained or raised on a peace establishment, is a very moderate demand. I expect the president and some members of Congress here in a day or two, and I will tell them so.

It was among my first acts, after I got home, to write to the president of each State society, appointing Philadelphia (and the first Monday in May) for the general meeting of the Cincinnati. Colonel Walker took all the letters to the presidents eastward of this with him before new year's day; and I despatched those for the southward, about the same time, by the post. I have even sent duplicates for fear of miscarriage; yet, though it is the most eligible method, it is to be feared it will not prove so effectual a communication, as a general notification in the public gazettes would have been. And, in case of failure, I shall be exceedingly sorry for not having adopted the most certain, as it would give me pleasure to find the first general meeting a very full one. I have named Philadelphia (contrary to my own judgment, as it is not central,) to comply with the wishes of South Carolina; which, being the most southern State, has desired it.* North Carolina I have not heard a tittle from, nor any thing official from New Hampshire. All the other States have acceded very unanimously to the proposition, which was sent from the army.

I am just beginning to experience that ease and freedom from public cares, which, however desirable, takes some time to realize; for, strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that it was not till lately I could get the better of my usual custom of ruminating, as

* That is, the most southern State, from which delegates would go to attend the meeting of the Society of the Cincinnati.

soon as I waked in the morning, on the business of the ensuing day; and of my surprise at finding, after revolving many things in my mind, that I was no longer a public man, nor had any thing to do with public transactions.

I feel now, however, as I conceive a wearied traveller must do, who, after treading many a painful step with a heavy burthen on his shoulders, is eased of the latter, having reached the haven to which all the former were directed; and from his house-top is looking back, and tracing with an eager eye the meanders by which he escaped the quicksands and mires which lay in his way; and into which none but the all-powerful Guide and Dispenser of human events could have prevented his falling.

I shall be very happy, and I hope I shall not be disappointed, in seeing you at the proposed meeting in Philadelphia. The friendship I have conceived for you will not be impaired by absence, but it may be no unpleasing circumstance to brighten the chain by a renewal of the covenant. My best wishes attend Mrs. Knox and the little folks, in which Mrs. Washington most heartily joins me. With sentiments of the purest esteem, regard, and affection, I am, &c.

P. S. I hope General Greene will be in the delegation from Rhode Island, and that we shall see him at the general meeting of the Cincinnati. Will you intimate this to him?*

* When the army was about to be disbanded, the officers then present with the army instituted a society called the *Society of the Cincinnati*. The idea is said to have originated with General Knox. After some preliminary arrangements, a meeting of the officers was held on the 13th of May, 1783, at the cantonment near Hudson's River, when the institution was organized, and a general plan adopted. The following extract will show the principles upon which it was founded.

"The officers of the American army, having generally been taken from

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 15 March, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

The Baron informs me, that he is about to make a final settlement with Congress, and to obtain from them that compensation, which his services shall appear to have merited; having entered into no stipulation at the time he engaged in their service, either for pay or emoluments; rather choosing to let his services point to their own reward, after they were performed, than to set a value upon them beforehand; wishing, on the one hand, for nothing more than they deserved; convinced, on the other, that the honor and dignity of the sovereign power of these States would do him ample

---

the citizens of America, possess a high veneration for the character of the illustrious Roman, Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus; and, being resolved to follow his example by returning to their citizenship, they think they may with propriety denominate themselves the SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI.

"The following principles shall be immutable, and form the basis of the Society of the Cincinnati.

"An incessant attention to preserve inviolate those exalted rights and liberties of human nature, for which they have fought and bled, and without which the high rank of a rational being is a curse instead of a blessing.

"An unalterable determination to promote and cherish, between the respective States, that union and national honor so essentially necessary to their happiness, and the future dignity of the American empire.

"To render permanent the cordial affection subsisting among the officers. This spirit will dictate brotherly kindness in all things, and particularly extend to the most substantial acts of beneficence, according to the ability of the Society, towards those officers and their families, who unfortunately may be under the necessity of receiving it."

A branch of the general society was to be instituted in each State, and meetings were to be held annually. The general society, consisting of delegates, not exceeding five in number from each State society, was to meet as often at least as once in three years. The society was to be perpetual and hereditary, descending through the eldest male posterity of the members, and, in failure thereof, to such collateral branches as should be deemed worthy of becoming its supporters. Honorary members might

justice, if our cause should be crowned with success, if not, he would share their fortunes and fall with them.*

What the Baron's expectations are, if he should incline to make them known, can be best explained by himself; but this I have heard him say, that to be placed in the same situation that he was in when he came to this country would content him. What this was I know not; but it should seem, that, if a *foreigner* gets nothing by the service, he ought not to lose by it.

My sentiments, with respect to the importance of the Baron's services, have been delivered to Congress in so many instances, and he himself has received such repeated testimony of it, that it is unnecessary for me in this place (especially as I have laid aside my military character, and am disinclined to trouble Congress any longer with my applications,) to give fresh proofs of my approbation of his abilities and con-

---

also be chosen in the several States, but not more than one to four of those in the military line, or their descendants. Membership was likewise extended to the French officers, who had been engaged in the American war. A medal of gold, suspended by a deep-blue ribbon edged with white, and descriptive of the union of America and France, was first adopted as a badge, or *order*; but this was afterwards altered, at the suggestion of Major L'Infant, to an *eagle*, bearing the figure of the medal on its breast. This form was thought to be better suited to the purposes of an *order*.

It does not appear, that General Washington took any part in forming the society, but, at the request of the officers, he put his name at the head of the list of members, and consented to act as president till the first general meeting, which was appointed to be held on the first Monday of May following. In October, while at Rocky Hill, he sent circulars to the senior officers in the different States, requesting them to give notice to him when the State societies should be organized; and recently he had sent other circulars appointing Philadelphia as the place of meeting on the first Monday of May.

A succinct history of the Society of the Cincinnati may be seen in MARSHALL'S *Life of Washington*, Vol. V. p. 24.

* For the general grounds upon which Baron Steuben engaged in the American service, see Vol. V. p. 526.

duct, tending to the same points; but I could wish to see his merit, which is great, and his services, which have been eminent, rewarded to his satisfaction. I am, with the most sincere esteem and regard, yours, &c.

TO BARON STEUBEN.

Mount Vernon, 15 March, 1784.

MY DEAR BARON,

I have perused with attention the plan, which you have formed, for establishing a Continental legion, and for training a certain part of the arms-bearing men of the union, as a militia in times of peace; and, with the small alterations, which have been suggested and made, I very much approve of it.

It was no unpleasing and flattering a circumstance to me, to find such a coincidence of ideas as appears to run through your plan, and the one I had the honor to lay before a committee of Congress in May last. Mine, however, was a hasty production, the consequence of a sudden call and little time for arrangement; yours, of maturer thought and better digestion. At the same time that I limited the propriety of a Continental militia, I glided almost insensibly into what I thought would, rather than what I conceived ought to be a proper peace establishment for this country.

A peace establishment ought always to have two objects in view; the one, present security of posts and of stores, and the public tranquillity; the other, to be prepared, if the latter is impracticable, to resist with efficacy the sudden attempts of a foreign or domestic enemy. If we have no occasion for troops for the first purposes, and were certain of not wanting any for the second, then all expense, of every nature and kind

whatsoever on this score, would be equally nugatory and unjustifiable; but, while men have a disposition to wrangle, and to disturb the peace of society, either from ambitious, political, or interested motives, common prudence and foresight require such an establishment, as is likely to ensure to us the blessings of peace, although the undertaking should be attended with difficulty and expense; and I can think of no plan more likely to answer the purpose, than the one you have suggested; which, the principles being established, may be enlarged or diminished at pleasure, according to circumstances. It therefore meets my approbation, and has my best wishes for its success.

I have the honor to be, &c.

TO MAJOR-GENERAL KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 20 March, 1784.

My dear Sir,

Your letter of the 21st ultimo did not reach my hands till yesterday. Having the governor here, and a house full of company, and the post being on the point of setting out for the eastward, I must confine the few lines I shall be able at this time to write, to the business of the Cincinnati.

From what you have said of the temper of your Assembly respecting this society, from the current of sentiment in the other New England States thereon, and from the official letter, which I have lately received from the Marquis de Lafayette on this subject, I am more than ever of opinion, that the general meeting at Philadelphia in May next ought, by all means, to be full and respectable. I was sorry to find these words, therefore, in your letter, after naming the delegates from your State, — "Probably only two will attend."

I think not only the whole number chosen should attend, but the abilities of them, when met, should be coolly, deliberately, and wisely employed to obviate the prejudices and remove the jealousies, which are already imbibed, and more than probably, through ignorance, envy, and perhaps worse motives, will increase and spread. I cannot, therefore, forbear urging in strong terms the necessity of the measure. The ensuing general meeting is either *useful* or *useless;* if the former, the representatives of each State society ought to be punctual in their attendance, especially under present circumstances; if it is not, all ought to be exempted; and I am sure none can give the time, which this journey and business require, with less convenience to themselves than myself.

By a letter, which I have just received from General Greene, I am informed that himself, General Varnum, and Major Lyman are chosen to represent the society of the State of Rhode Island; that he intends to be in South Carolina before the meeting; and it is not expected that more than one will attend it! I wish this could be otherwise, and that General Greene would attend. Private interest or convenience may be a plea for many, and the meeting thereby be thin and unfit for the purpose of its institution.

I have heard nothing yet from New Hampshire, New York, or New Jersey, to the eastward, nor any thing from the southward; to the last, duplicates have long since been sent.

As there can be no interruption of the post by bad weather now, and there is time for it, pray let me hear more fully from you on the subject of this letter by the return of it; particularly what the committees of your Assembly have reported. Mrs. Washington joins me in best wishes for Mrs. Knox, yourself, and

the little folks, with, dear Sir, your most obedient and affectionate humble servant.*

TO DR. JAMES CRAIK.

Mount Vernon, 25 March, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

In answer to Mr. Bowie's request to you, permit me to assure that gentleman, that I shall at all times be glad to see him at this retreat; that, whenever he is here, I will give him the perusal of any public papers antecedent to my appointment to the command of the American army, that he may be laying up materials for his work; and that, whenever Congress shall have

---

* General Washington wrote to Mr. Jefferson on the 8th of April, requesting a statement of his views in regard to the Society of the Cincinnati, and also desiring to be informed what were the probable sentiments of Congress on the same subject.

A pamphlet had been published, entitled *Considerations on the Society, or Order, of Cincinnati,*" which, although anonymous, was known to have been written by Judge Burke of South Carolina. It was the author's chief purpose to show, that the society created a nobility, or what he called a class of "*hereditary patricians*"; and he predicted very direful consequences to the liberty and happiness of the people, if the institution were allowed to gain strength upon the plan of its original establishment. He recommended legislative interference to put a stop to a political combination of military commanders, fraught with principles so dangerous, and portending to the republic evils so alarming.

"This pamphlet," said General Washington, "has, I am told, had its effect. People are alarmed, especially in the eastern States; how justly, and how contrary to the avowed principles of the society and the purity of their motives, I will not declare, lest it should appear that I wish to bias your judgment, rather than to obtain an opinion; which, if you please, might be accompanied with sentiments, under the information here given, respecting the most eligible measures to be pursued by the Society at their next meeting. You may be assured, Sir, that to the good opinion alone, which I entertain of your abilities and candor, this liberty is to be attributed."

See Mr. Jefferson's answer, containing a full expression of his sentiments, in JEFFERSON'S *Writings*, Vol. I. p. 223.

opened their archives to any historian for information, he shall have the examination of all others in my possession, which are subsequent thereto; but that, till this epoch, I do not think myself at liberty to unfold papers, which contain all the occurrences and transactions of my late command; first, because I conceive it to be respectful to the sovereign power to let them take the lead in this business; and next, because I have, upon this principle, refused Dr. Gordon and others, who are about to write the history of the revolution, this privilege.

I will frankly declare to you, my dear Doctor, that any memoirs of my life, distinct and unconnected with the general history of the war, would rather hurt my feelings than tickle my pride whilst I live. I had rather glide gently down the stream of life, leaving it to posterity to think and say what they please of me, than by any act of mine to have vanity or ostentation imputed to me. And I will further confess, that I was rather surprised into a consent, when Dr. Witherspoon (very unexpectedly) made the application, than considered the tendency of that consent. It did not occur to me, at that moment, from the manner in which the question was propounded, that no history of my life, without a very great deal of trouble indeed, could be written with the least degree of accuracy, unless recourse was had to me or to my papers for information; that it would not derive sufficient authenticity without a promulgation of this fact; and that such a promulgation would subject me to the imputation I have just mentioned, which would hurt me the more, as I do not think vanity is a trait of my character.

It is for this reason, and candor obliges me to be explicit, that I shall stipulate against the publication of the memoirs Mr. Bowie has in contemplation to give

the world, till I should see more probability of avoiding the darts, which I think would be pointed at me on such an occasion; and how far, under these circumstances, it would be worth Mr. Bowie's while to spend time, which might be more usefully employed in other matters, is with him to consider; as is also the practicability of doing it efficiently without having free access to the documents of this war, which must fill the most important pages of the memoir, and which, for the reasons already assigned, cannot be admitted at present. If nothing happens more than I at present foresee, I shall be in Philadelphia on or before the 1st of May, where it is probable I may see Mr. Bowie, and converse further with him on this subject. In the mean while, I will thank you to communicate these sentiments. I am, very truly, your affectionate friend, &c.

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 29 March, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

It was not in my power to answer your favor of the 15th by the last post, for the reason then assigned. I wish I may be able to do it to your satisfaction now, as I am again obliged to pay my attention to the other company, the Governor being gone.

My opinion coincides perfectly with yours respecting the practicability of an easy and short communication between the waters of the Ohio and Potomac, of the advantages of that communication and the preference it has over all others, and of the policy there would be in this State and Maryland to adopt and render it facile. But I confess to you freely, I have no expectation, that the public will adopt the measure; for, besides the jeal-

ousies which prevail, and the difficulty of proportioning such funds as may be allotted for the purposes you have mentioned, there are two others, which, in my opinion, will be yet harder to surmount. These are (if I have not imbibed too unfavorable an opinion of my countrymen) the impracticability of bringing the great and truly wise policy of the measure to their view, and the difficulty of extracting money from them for such a purpose, if it could be done; for it appears to me, maugre all the sufferings of the public creditors, breach of public faith, and loss of public reputation, that payment of the taxes, which are already laid, will be postponed as long as possible. How then are we to expect new ones for purposes more remote?

I am not so disinterested in this matter as you are; but I am made very happy to find that a man of discernment and liberality, who has no particular interest in the plan, thinks as I do, who have lands in that country, the value of which would be enhanced by the adoption of such a measure.

More than ten years ago I was struck with the importance of it; and, despairing of any aid from the public, I became a principal mover of a bill to empower a number of subscribers to undertake at their own expense, on conditions which were expressed, the extension of the navigation from tide water to Will's Creek, about one hundred and fifty miles; and I devoutly wish that this may not be the only expedient by which it can be effected now. To get this business in motion, I was obliged even upon that ground to comprehend James River, in order to remove the jealousies, which arose from the attempt to extend the navigation of the Potomac. The plan, however, was in a tolerably good train, when I set out for Cambridge in 1775, and would have been in an excellent way, had it not been for the

difficulties, which were met with in the Maryland Assembly from the opposition which was given (according to report) by the Baltimore merchants, who were alarmed, and perhaps not without cause, at the consequence of water transportation to Georgetown of the produce, which usually came to their market by land.

The local interest of that place, joined to the short-sighted politics or contracted views of another part of that Assembly, gave Mr. Thomas Johnson, who was a warm promoter of the scheme on the north side of the Potomac, a great deal of trouble. In this situation I left matters when I took command of the army. The war afterwards called men's attention to different objects, and all the money they could or would raise was applied to other purposes. But with you I am satisfied that not a moment ought to be lost in recommencing this business, as I know the Yorkers will delay no time to remove every obstacle in the way of the other communication, so soon as the posts of Oswego and Niagara are surrendered; and I shall be mistaken if they do not build vessels for the navigation of the lakes, which will supersede the necessity of coasting on either side.

It appears to me, that the interest and policy of Maryland are proportionably concerned with those of Virginia, to remove obstructions, and to invite the trade of the western country into the channel you have mentioned. You will have frequent opportunities of learning the sentiments of the principal characters of that State, respecting this matter; and I wish, if it should fall in your way, that you would discourse with Mr. Thomas Johnson, formerly governor of Maryland, on this subject. How far, upon mature consideration, I may depart from the resolution I had formed, of living perfectly at my ease, exempt from every kind of re-

sponsibility, is more than I can at present absolutely determine. The sums granted, the manner of granting them, the powers and objects, would merit consideration. The trouble, if my situation at the time would permit me to engage in a work of this sort, would be set at nought; and the immense advantages, which this country would derive from the measure, would be no small stimulus to the undertaking, if that undertaking could be made to comport with those ideas, and that line of conduct, with which I meant to glide gently down the current of life, and it did not interfere with any other plan I might have in contemplation.

I am not less in sentiment with you, respecting the impolicy of this State's grasping at more territory than they are competent to the government of; and, for the reasons you assign, I very much approve of a meridian from the mouth of the Great Kenhawa as a convenient and very proper line of separation, but I am mistaken if our chief magistrate will coincide with us in this opinion.

I will not enter upon the subject of commerce. It has its advantages and disadvantages; but which of them preponderates, is not now the question. From trade our citizens will not be restrained, and therefore it behoves us to place it in the most convenient channels under proper regulations, freed as much as possible from those vices, which luxury, the consequence of wealth and power, naturally introduces.

The incertitude, which prevails in Congress, and the non-attendance of its members, are discouraging to those, who are willing and ready to discharge the trust, which is reposed in them; whilst it is disgraceful in a high degree to our country. But it is my belief, that the case will never be otherwise, so long as that body persist in their present mode of doing business, and

will hold constant instead of annual sessions; against the former of which my mind furnishes me with a variety of arguments; but not one, in times of peace, in favor of them.

Annual sessions would always produce a full representation, and alertness in business. The delegates, after a separation of eight or ten months, would meet each other with glad countenances. They would be complaisant; they would yield to each other all, that duty to their constituents would allow; and they would have better opportunities of becoming acquainted with their sentiments, and removing improper prejudices, when they are imbibed, by mixing with them during the recess. Men, who are always together, get tired of each other's company; they throw off that restraint, which is necessary to keep things in proper tune; they say and do things, which are personally disgusting; this begets opposition; opposition begets faction; and so it goes on, till business is impeded, often at a stand. I am sure (having the business prepared by proper boards or a committee) an annual session of two months would despatch more business than is now done in twelve, and this by a full representation of the Union.

Long as this letter is, I intended to be more full on some of the points, and to touch on others; but it is not in my power, as I am obliged to snatch from company the moments, which give you this hasty production of my thoughts on the subject of your letter. With very great esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO JONATHAN TRUMBULL, JUNIOR.

Mount Vernon, 4 April, 1784.

MY DEAR SIR,

The choice of your delegates to the general meeting of the Society of Cincinnati gave me pleasure. I wish very sincerely you would all attend. Let me impress this upon you, with a request that you would impress it upon your brothers of the delegation.

This meeting, considering the prejudices and jealousies which have arisen, should not only be respectable in numbers, but respectable in abilities. Our measures should be deliberate and wise. If we cannot convince the people, that their fears are ill founded, we should at least in a degree yield to them, and not suffer that, which was intended for the best of purposes, to produce a bad result; which will be the consequence of divisions, proceeding from an opposition to the current opinion, if this be the fact in the eastern States, as some say it is. Independently of this, there are other matters, which call for attention at the ensuing meeting.

You will oblige me, by having the enclosed advertisement inserted twice in a gazette of your State. The one, which is most diffusive among that class of people, whose views it is most likely to meet, will answer my purposes best. Know the cost, and I will pay it when we meet. Present my best regards to your good father, whether in or out of office. Mrs. Washington joins in best wishes for you and Mrs. Trumbull, with, dear Sir, your most obedient and affectionate humble servant.

TO MAJOR-GENERAL DUPORTAIL.

Mount Vernon, 4 April, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

At present I can do no more than snatch a moment to acknowledge (by Monsieur le Comte de Laval, who is going immediately to Paris, and gave me the honor of a call as he travelled from Charleston to New York,) the receipt of your letter of the 24th of December, to thank you for your kind remembrance of me, and to assure you that it will always give me great pleasure to hear from you or to see you in America.

Matters in this country, since you left it, remain nearly *in statu quo.* It is said, however, that a more liberal sentiment is taking place in those States, which were most opposed to commutation and the other interests of the army; and that the impost, which has labored so long in them, will certainly pass this spring. This will be a principal move towards restoring public credit, and raising our sinking reputation. More competent powers, it is thought, will also in a little time be vested in Congress, and all things will come right after the people feel the inconveniences, which they might have avoided, if they had not been too fond of judging for themselves.*

* The following remarks, contained in a letter from General Knox to General Washington, afford some degree of insight into the opinions of the members of Congress respecting their powers.

"I have been here nearly one week, and nothing of importance has been decided upon, owing to a contrariety of sentiments concerning the powers vested in Congress to raise troops in time of peace for any purpose. There appears but one sentiment respecting the necessity of having troops for the frontiers, but the difficulty is how to obtain them. The southern States are generally of opinion, that the confederation vests Congress with sufficient powers for this purpose, but the eastern States are of a different opinion. The eastern delegates are willing to *recommend* the raising of troops for the western posts; but the gentlemen from the southward say this would be giving up a right, which it is of impor-

I have only newspaper accounts of air-balloons, to which I do not know what credence to give; as the tales related of them are marvellous, and lead us to expect, that our friends at Paris in a little time will come flying through the air, instead of ploughing the ocean to get to America.

Present me affectionately to Gouvion, from whom I received a letter just at his departure from Philadelphia. Tell him he shall always have a first place in my esteem, and that whatever contributes to his happiness or interest will give me pleasure. With great esteem and regard, I am dear Sir, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 4 April, 1784.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

I have no expectation that this letter will find you in France. Your favor of November to me, and of December to Congress, both announce your intention of making us a visit this spring. On this hope I shall fully rely, and shall ardently long for the moment in which I can embrace you in America. Nothing could add more to the pleasure of this interview, than the happiness of seeing Madame de Lafayette with you,

---

tance to preserve, and they cannot consent to *recommend* when they ought to *require*; so that from this cause it is to be feared, that there will not be any troops raised; and there are many difficulties as to sending those which are raised, and at West Point." — *Annapolis, May 28th.*

Again; "I write a line to inform you, that I am just setting out for Boston. The president, who has gone to Mount Vernon, will inform you of the state of public matters. Things are not well, and will probably be worse before they are better." — *June 4th.* A vote of Congress on the subject of *requiring* troops to be raised manifests the same difference as above indicated, between the opinions of the delegates from the east and the south. — *Journals, May 26th.*

that I might have the honor of thanking her in person for the flattering letter she has been pleased to write me; and to assure her of the sincerity of my wishes, and those of Mrs. Washington, that she could make Mount Vernon her home while she stays in America.

Lest I should be disappointed of this gratification, I accompany this letter with another to the Marchioness; and, if I could express to her half what I feel upon the occasion, it would, if twenty years could be taken from the number of my days, make you diligent at your post. Adieu. It is unnecessary to tell you how much I am yours, &c.

TO THE MARCHIONESS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 4 April, 1784.

MADAM,

It is now more than ever I want words to express the sensibility and gratitude, with which the honor of your felicitations of the 26th of December has inspired me. If my expression was equal to the feelings of my heart, the homage I am about to render you would appear in a more favorable point of view, than my most sanguine expectations will encourage me to hope for. I am more inclined, therefore, to rely upon the continuance of your indulgent sentiments towards me, and that innate goodness for which you are remarkable, than upon any merit I possess, or any assurances I could give of my sense of the obligation I am under for the honor you have conferred upon me by your correspondence.

Great as your claim is, as a French or American woman, or as the wife of my amiable friend, to my affectionate regards, you have others to which the palm

must be yielded. The charms of your person, and the beauties of your mind, have a more powerful operation. These, Madam, have endeared you to me, and every thing, which partakes of your nature, will have a claim to my affections. George and Virginia, the offspring of your love, whose names do honor to my country and to myself, have a double claim, and will be the objects of my vows.

Freed from the clangor of arms and the bustle of a camp, from the cares of public employment and the responsibility of office, I am now enjoying domestic ease under the shadow of my own vine and my own fig-tree; and in a small villa, with the implements of husbandry and lambkins around me, I expect to glide gently down the stream of life, till I am entombed in the mansion of my fathers.

Mrs. Washington is highly honored by your participations, and feels very sensibly the force of your polite invitation to Paris; but she is too far advanced in life, and is too much immersed in the care of her little progeny,* to cross the Atlantic. This, my dear Marchioness (indulge the freedom), is not the case with you. You have youth (and, if you should not incline to bring your children, can leave them with all the advantages of education), and must have a curiosity to see the country, young, rude, and uncultivated as it is, for the liberties of which your husband has fought, bled, and acquired much glory, where every body admires, every body loves him. Come, then, let me entreat you, and call my cottage your home; for your own doors do not open to you with more readiness than mine would. You will see the plain manner in which we live, and meet with rustic civility; and you shall taste the sim-

* The children of her son, John Parke Custis, who died in 1781. These children were three daughters and a son.

plicity of rural life. It will diversify the scene, and may give you a higher relish for the gayeties of the court, when you return to Versailles. In these wishes, and in most respectful compliments, Mrs. Washington joins me. With sentiments of strong attachment, and very great regard, I have the honor to be, Madam, &c.

TO MISS SIDNEY LEE.*

Mount Vernon, 15 April, 1784.

MADAM,

I fear you will think me inattentive to your commands. Appearances are against me, but I have not been unmindful of your request, or my promise. During my continuance with the army, I wrote several letters to Mr. Drew, clerk of the court in which the will of Major-General Lee was recorded; all of which I presume miscarried; as the first letter he acknowledged having received from me was written in December last, after I had retired to this seat. His letter will account for the delay, which took place afterwards; and the sending to Richmond, which is at a considerable distance from hence, to obtain the governor's certificate, has filled up the great measure of time, which has elapsed since my promise to procure you an attested copy of the will; and this, I hope, will plead for my seeming neglect. Berkeley is a remote county, much out of the post road, which may account for the miscarriage of my letters to Mr. Drew. Your application to me, Madam, required no apology. I

* The sister of General Charles Lee. She resided at Chester in England, and after her brother's death she wrote to General Washington, requesting his aid in procuring a copy of her brother's will, and information respecting the state in which his affairs had been left.

only regret, that it has not been in my power to comply with your request sooner. If there is any thing further, in which I can be serviceable, I pray you to command me. I have the honor to be, &c.

TO GOVERNOR TRUMBULL.

Philadelphia, 15 May, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

It was with great pleasure and thankfulness I received a recognisance of your friendship, in your letter of the 20th of last month.

It is indeed a pleasure, from the walks of private life to view in retrospect all the meanderings of our past labors, the difficulties through which we have waded, and the happy haven to which the ship has been brought. Is it possible, after this, that it should founder? Will not the All-wise and All-powerful Director of human events preserve it? I think he will. He may, however, for some wise purpose of his own, suffer our indiscretions and folly to place our national character low in the political scale; and this, unless more wisdom and less prejudice take the lead in our government, will most certainly happen.

Believe me, my dear Sir, there is no disparity in our ways of thinking and acting, though there may happen to be a little in the years we have lived, which places the advantage of the correspondence on my side, as I shall benefit by your experience and observations; and no correspondence can be more pleasing to me than that, which originates from similar sentiments and similar conduct through (though not a long war, the importance of it and attainments considered,) a painful contest. I pray you, therefore, to

continue me among the number of your friends, and to favor me with such observations and sentiments as may occur.

As my good friend, Colonel Trumbull, is perfectly acquainted with the proceedings of the meeting, which brought us together, our embarrassments and final decision, I will refer the detail of them to him. With the most perfect esteem and regard, I have the honor to be, &c.

TO PHILIP SCHUYLER.

Philadelphia, 15 May, 1784.

My dear Sir,

It has long been my wish, and, until lately, my intention, to proceed from the present meeting of the Cincinnati to the Falls of Niagara, and probably into Canada. Two causes, however, prevent it. My private concerns are of such a nature, that it is morally impossible for me to be absent long from home at this juncture. It is indeed exceedingly inconvenient for me to be from home at all. The other is, that I am not disposed to be indebted for my passport to Niagara to the courtesy of the British, who are still I believe possessed of our western posts.

I cannot but thank you, however, my dear Sir, for the polite and friendly offers contained in your letters of the 6th and 12th instant, both of which are safe at hand. If ever I should have it in my power to make an excursion of that kind, nothing could add more to the pleasure of it than having you of the party.

We have been amazingly embarrassed in the business that brought us here. It is now drawing to a conclusion, and will soon be given to the public. Oth-

erwise I would give it to you in detail.* Mrs. Washington is not with me at this place, otherwise I am sure she would join me in best respects to Mrs. Schuyler and yourself. I am, with great esteem, &c.

TO COUNT D'ESTAING.

Philadelphia, 15 May, 1784.

SIR,

I cannot express to you all the gratitude, which I feel, for the very great politeness manifested for me in your letter of the 25th of December, which I now have the honor to acknowledge. The very tender and friendly regards, which you are pleased to mention as possessing your mind for my person and character, have affected me with the deepest sensibility, and will be for ever remembered, as a most agreeable token from the Count d'Estaing; for whose character as a gentleman and a soldier, and for whose attention to the American interests and cause, I have been impressed with the highest veneration.

I feel myself happy, that your Excellency countenances with so much cordiality the association formed by the officers of the American army; a bond of cement, Sir, which, if any thing could be wanting for that purpose, will, I trust, render durable and permanent those mutual friendships and connexions, which have happily taken root between the officers of your army and ours. And I am peculiarly happy to be able to inform you, that the wishes expressed in your letter are more than fulfilled; since, by the institution of our Society, as amended and altered at their general meet-

---

* See APPENDIX, No. I.

ing in this city held during the present month, which will be officially forwarded to the Society in France, your Excellency will find that the honors of it are extended, not only to the few gentlemen honored by your particular mention, but to all the captains ranking as colonels in your navy; which, although not clearly expressed in the original constitution, is now in the fullest terms provided for, and not left to doubtful inference.

I am much pleased with the prospect of soon having the gratification of seeing in this country our mutual and worthy friend Lafayette. Be assured, Sir, I shall be among the warmest of his friends, who will welcome him to the American shore, and rejoice in an opportunity to embrace him in my arms. I am pleased that our confidence in Major L'Enfant has been so honorably placed, and that the business entrusted to that gentleman's conduct has been executed to so great satisfaction. With the highest regard, I am, &c.

TO COUNT DE ROCHAMBEAU.

Philadelphia, 16 May, 1784.

My dear Count,

This letter will be handed to you by our mutual friend, General Armand, Marquis de la Rouerie. The merits of this gentleman, and his military services in this country, are too well known to you to require any commendation from me. If they did, he is possessed of the fullest testimony. He now wishes promotion and employment in the service of his country, and, as he is deserving of it, I wish he could be indulged; but good wishes are all I can afford, as it has been an established principle with me to avoid personal applications. The disposition of his Prince to reward the

brave and meritorious, and the justice of his government, will, I have no doubt, confer those honors on him, which he shall appear to deserve; and this, even if I were not restrained by the considerations just mentioned, is all I could ask. Permit me to repeat to you the assurances of my sincere esteem and regard, and the consideration with which I have the honor to be, my dear Count, &c.

TO DAVID HUMPHREYS.

Mount Vernon, 2 June, 1784.

MY DEAR HUMPHREYS,

I very sincerely congratulate you on your late appointment. It is honorable, and I dare say must be agreeable. I did not hear of it until I arrived at Annapolis, where I remained but one day, and that occasioned by the detention of my carriage and horses on the Eastern Shore. General Knox not reaching that place before I left it, your letter of the 18th only got to my hands on Sunday last by the post.

I now send you, under flying seals, letters to Mr. Jefferson, Dr. Franklin, and Count d'Estaing. The letter to the Chevalier Chastellux also mentions you and your appointment. My former correspondence with England ceased at the commencement of hostilities, and I have opened no new one since; but I enclose to you a letter for Sir Edward Newenham, of Ireland, from whom I have lately received several very polite letters, and a pressing invitation to correspond with him. He has been a warm friend to America during her whole struggle. He is a man of fortune, and of excellent character (as I am told), and may, if you should go to Ireland, be a valuable acquaintance.

It only remains for me now to wish you a pleasant passage, and that you may realize all the pleasure, which you must have in expectation. It cannot be necessary to add how happy I shall be at all times to hear from you. You will have it in your power to contribute much to my amusement and information, and as far as you can do the latter consistently with your duty and public trust, I shall be obliged. Further I do not require; and, even here, mark *private* what you think not altogether fit for the public ear, and it shall remain with me. Mrs. Washington adds her best wishes for you, and you may rest assured, that few friendships are warmer, or professions more sincere, than mine for you. Adieu, &c.

P. S. Just recollecting my old neighbour Colonel (who may now be Lord) Fairfax, I give you a letter to him also, in case you should go to England.*

TO BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Mount Vernon, 2 June, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

Congress having been pleased to appoint Colonel Humphreys secretary to the commissioners for forming commercial treaties in Europe, I take the liberty of introducing him to you.

This gentleman was several years in my family as an aid-de-camp. His zeal in the cause of his country, his good sense, prudence, and attachment to me,

* Colonel Humphreys sailed from New York for France in July, as secretary to the commissioners in Paris. General Kosciuszko took passage in the same vessel, having been in the United States nearly eight years, and served in the army from October, 1776, to the end of the war.

have rendered him dear to me; and I persuade myself you will find no confidence, which you may think proper to repose in him, misplaced. He possesses an excellent heart, good natural and acquired abilities, and sterling integrity, as well as sobriety and an obliging disposition. A full conviction of his possessing all these good qualities makes me less scrupulous of recommending him to your patronage and friendship. He will repeat to you the assurances of the perfect esteem, regard, and consideration, with which I have the honor to be, dear Sir, &c.

TO THE CHEVALIER DE CHASTELLUX.

Mount Vernon, 2 June, 1784.

MY DEAR SIR,

I had the honor to receive a short letter from you by Major L'Enfant. My official letters to the Counts d'Estaing and Rochambeau, which I expect will be submitted to the members of the Society of the Cincinnati in France, will inform you of the proceedings of the general meeting recently held at Philadelphia, and of the reasons, which induced a departure from some of the original principles and rules of the Society. As these have been detailed, I will not repeat, them; and as we have no occurrences out of the common course, except the establishment of ten new States in the Western Territory, and the appointment of Mr. Jefferson, whose talents and worth are well known to you, as one of the commissioners for forming commercial treaties in Europe,* I will

* A committee of Congress, consisting of Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Chase, and Mr. Howell, reported a plan for the temporary government of the

only repeat to you the assurances of my friendship, and of the pleasure I should feel in seeing you in the shade of those trees which my hands have planted; and which, by their rapid growth, at once indicate a knowledge of my declining years, and their disposition to spread their mantles over me before I go hence to return no more. For this, their gratitude, I will nurture them while I stay.

Before I conclude, permit me to recommend Colonel Humphreys, who is appointed secretary to the com-

---

Western Territory, which was taken into consideration on the 19th of April.

According to this plan, the Territory was to be divided into ten States, by parallels of latitude and meridian lines. The settlers of each State were to form a temporary government for themselves, according to certain prescribed regulations, till their number should be equal to that of the inhabitants of the smallest State in the Confederation, when they were to be taken into the Union, and to enjoy all the privileges of the original States. The territorial governments were to be established by the settlers on the following principles as their basis.

"1. That they shall for ever remain a part of the United States of America.

"2. That in their persons, property, and territory, they shall be subject to the government of the United States in Congress assembled, and to the articles of confederation, in all those cases in which the original States shall be so subject.

"3. That they shall be subject to pay a part of the federal debts contracted or to be contracted, to be apportioned on them by Congress, according to the same common rule and measure by which apportionments thereof shall be made on the other States.

"4. That their respective governments shall be in republican forms, and shall admit no person to be a citizen, who holds any hereditary title.

"5. That, after the year 1800 of the Christian era, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in any of the said States, otherwise than in punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted to have been personally guilty."

The names of the ten new States, beginning at the northwest and proceeding southwardly, were to be Sylvania, Michigania, Chersonesus, Assenisipia, Metropotamia, Illenoia, Saratoga, Washington, Polypotamia, Pelisipia. The report of the committee was debated for several days, during which it underwent very essential changes, as appears by the form in which it was finally adopted. — *Journals, April 23d*, 1784.

mission, to your countenance and civilities while he remains in France. He possesses an excellent heart and a good understanding. With every sentiment of esteem and regard, I am, my dear Chevalier, your most affectionate, &c.

TO JAMES MADISON.

Mount Vernon, 12 June, 1784.

SIR,

Can nothing be done in our Assembly for poor Paine? Must the merits and service of *Common Sense** continue to glide down the stream of time unrewarded by this country? His writings certainly have had a powerful effect upon the public mind. Ought they not, then, to meet an adequate return? He is poor, he is chagrined, and almost, if not altogether, in despair of relief. New York, not the least distressed, nor best able State in the Union, has done something for him. This kind of provision he prefers to an allowance from Congress. He has reasons for it, which to him are conclusive; and such, I think, as may be approved by others. His views are moderate; a decent independency is, I believe, all he aims at. Ought he to be disappointed of this? If you think otherwise, I am sure you will not only move the matter, but give it your support. For me, it only remains to feel for his situation; and to assure you of the sincere esteem and regard, with which I have the honor to be, dear Sir, &c.†

---

* The signature affixed by Thomas Paine to his early political writings in favor of the independence of the United States.

† Similar letters were written to Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee. The subject was brought before the legislature of Virginia, and

TO MONSIEUR DE MARBOIS.*

Mount Vernon, 20 June, 1784.

SIR,

It was with very great pleasure, that I received from your own pen an account of the agreeable and happy connexion you were about to form with Miss Moore. Though you have given many proofs of your predilection and attachment to this country, yet this last may be considered as not only a great and tender one, but as the most pleasing and lasting tie of affec-

---

it was proposed to give Mr. Paine a moiety of a tract of land on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay.

"The easy reception it found," said Mr. Madison, "induced the friends of the measure to add the other moiety to the proposition, which would have raised the market value of the donation to about four thousand pounds, or upwards, though it would not probably have commanded a rent of more than one hundred pounds per annum. In this form the bill passed through two readings. The third reading proved, that the tide had suddenly changed, for the bill was thrown out by a large majority. An attempt was next made to sell the land in question, and apply two thousand pounds of the money to the purchase of a farm for Mr. Paine. This was lost by a single voice. Whether a greater disposition to reward patriotic and distinguished exertions of genius will be found on any succeeding occasion, is not for me to predetermine. Should it finally appear, that the merits of the man, whose writings have so much contributed to enforce and foster the spirit of independence in the people of America, are unable to inspire them with a just beneficence, the world, it is to be feared, will give us as little credit for our policy as for our gratitude in this particular." — *Letter, July 2d.*

Mr. Lee wrote, that he was not present when the proposition was brought forward. "I have been told," said he, "that it miscarried from its being observed, that he had shown enmity to this State by having written a pamphlet injurious to our claim of western territory. It has ever appeared to me, that this pamphlet was the consequence of Mr. Paine's being himself imposed upon, and that it was rather the fault of the place than the man." — *July 22d.*

The pamphlet here alluded to was entitled, *Public Good; being an Examination into the Claim of Virginia to the vacant Western Territory, and of the Right of the United States to the same;* 1780.

* Chargé d'Affaires in the United States from the court of Versailles, after the return of M. de la Luzerne to France.

tion. The accomplishments of the lady, and her connexions, cannot fail to make it so. On this joyous event, accept, I pray you, the congratulations of Mrs. Washington and myself, who cannot fail to participate in whatever contributes to the felicity of yourself and your amiable consort, with whom we both have the happiness of an acquaintance, and to whom and the family we beg leave to present our compliments. With very great esteem and regard, and an earnest desire to approve myself worthy of your friendship, I have the honor to be, &c.*

---

* In the order of dates we may here introduce the following resolution, passed by the legislature of Virginia on the 22d of June.

"Resolved, that the Executive be requested to take measures for procuring a statue of General Washington to be of the finest marble, and best workmanship, with the following inscription on its pedestal.

"'The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia have caused this Statue to be erected as a Monument of Affection and Gratitude to George Washington, who, uniting to the Endowments of the Hero the Virtues of the Patriot, and exerting both in establishing the Liberties of his Country, has rendered his Name dear to his Fellow Citizens, and given the World an immortal Example of true Glory.'"

This statue was executed by Houdon, who was employed by Mr. Jefferson, at the request of the Governor of Virginia, and who came to America in the summer of 1785 for the express purpose of taking an exact cast of General Washington's features and person. He returned to Paris and finished his work in that place. The statue has always been considered as exhibiting a remarkable resemblance of the original. It is placed in the State-House at Richmond.

In a niche in the same apartment is likewise a marble bust of Lafayette, which was voted by the General Assembly of Virginia, in December, 1781, "as a lasting monument of his merit and their gratitude." Immediately after Lafayette's visit to Virginia, in 1784, the General Assembly authorized and desired the Governor to cause a similar bust to be procured, and presented in the name of the Commonwealth to the city of Paris, with a request that it should be accepted and preserved in some public place in that city. This bust was accepted by the authorities of the city of Paris, and placed in the Hôtel de Ville, with ceremonies suited to the occasion. See *Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain*, Tom. III. p. 381.

TO DR. JAMES CRAIK.

Mount Vernon, 10 July, 1784.

DEAR DOCTOR,

I have come to a resolution, if not prevented by any thing at present unforeseen, to take a trip to the western country this fall, and for that purpose to leave home the first of September. By appointment I am to be at the Warm Springs on the 7th of that month; and at Gilbert Simpson's the 15th, where, having my partnership accounts, with some of very long standing, to settle, and things to provide for the trip to the Kenhawa, I expect to be by the 10th or 11th, that is, four or five days before the 15th. It is possible, though I cannot be certain at this time, that I shall, if I find it necessary to lay my lands off in lots, make a day or two's delay at each of my tracts upon the Ohio, before I reach the Kenhawa, where my stay will be the longest, and more or less according to circumstances.

I mention all these matters, that you may be fully apprized of my plan, and the time it may probably take to accomplish it. If, under this information, it would suit you to go with me, I should be very glad of your company. No other person except my nephew, Bushrod Washington, and that is uncertain, will be of the party; because it can be no amusement to others to follow me in a tour of business, and from one of my tracts of land to another; for I am not going to explore the country, nor am I in search of fresh lands, but to secure what I have; nor would it suit me to be embarrassed by the plans, movements, or whims of others, or even to have my own made unwieldy. For this reason I shall continue to decline all overtures, which may be made to accompany me. Your business and mine lie in the same part of the country, and are of a

similar nature; the only difference is, that mine may be longer in the execution. If you go, you will have occasion to take nothing from hence, but a servant to look after your horses, and such bedding as you may think proper to make use of. I will carry a marquee, some camp utensils, and a few stores. A boat, or some other kind of vessel, will be provided for the voyage down the river, either at my place on the Youghiogany, or Fort Pitt, measures for this purpose having been already taken. A few medicines, and hooks and lines, you may probably want. My compliments and best wishes, in which Mrs. Washington joins, are offered to Mrs. Craik and your family, and I am, with sincere esteem and friendship, dear Sir, yours, &c.*

* The General Assembly of Virginia, on the 22d of June, voted an address to General Washington. A joint committee, appointed for the purpose by the two Houses, waited on him a few days afterwards at Mount Vernon, and presented to him the address in behalf of the Assembly; to which, on the 15th of July, he made the following reply.

"GENTLEMEN,

"With feelings, which are more easy to be conceived than expressed, I meet and reciprocate the congratulations of the representatives of this commonwealth on the final establishment of peace.

"Nothing can add more to the pleasure, which arises from a conscious discharge of public trust, than the approbation of one's country. To have been so happy, under a vicissitude of fortune, amidst the difficult and trying scenes of an arduous conflict, as to meet this, is, in my mind, to have attained the highest honor; and the consideration of it, in my present peaceful retirement, will heighten all my domestic joys, and constitute my greatest felicity.

"I should have been truly wanting in duty, and must have frustrated the great and important object for which we resorted to arms, if, seduced by a temporary regard for fame, I had suffered the paltry love of it to interfere with my country's welfare; the interest of which was the only inducement, which carried me into the field, or permitted the sacred rights of civil authority, though but for a moment, to be violated and infringed by a power, meant originally to rescue and confirm them.

"For those rewards and blessings, which you have invoked for me in this world, and for the fruition of that happiness, which you pray for in that which is to come, you have, Gentlemen, all my thanks and all my gratitude. I wish I could ensure them to you, and the State you represent, a hundred fold."

TO JACOB READ.*

Mount Vernon, 11 August, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

I return the letter you were so obliging as to send me, and thank you for the perusal of it. No copy has been taken; nor will any part of its contents transpire through me.

Although Mr. L——'s informant may have the means of acquiring knowledge, and though it is undoubted that the British cabinet wish to recover the United States to a dependence on that government, yet I can scarce think they ever expect to see it realized, or that they have any plan in contemplation to try to effect it; unless *our* want of wisdom, and perseverance in error, should in their judgment render the attempt certain. The affairs of Ireland, if our accounts from thence are to be relied on, are in too turbulent a state to suffer Great Britain to enter very soon into another quarrel with America, even if her finances were on a more respectable footing, than I believe them to be; and her prospect of success must diminish as our population increases, and the government becomes more consistent; without the last of which, indeed, any thing may be apprehended. It is, however, as necessary for the sovereign in council, as it is for the general in the field, not to despise information, but to hear all, compare all, combine them with other circumstances and take measures accordingly. Nothing, I confess, would sooner induce me to give credit to a hostile intention on the part of Great Britain, than their continuing, without the shadow of reason (for I really see none), to withhold from us the western posts on the American side of the line, and sending, as the gazettes

* A delegate in Congress from South Carolina.

say is their intention, Sir Guy Carleton over as Viceroy to their possessions in America, which are to undergo a new organization.

The opinion I have here given, you will readily perceive is founded upon the ideas I entertain of the temper of Ireland, the imbecility of Great Britain, and her internal divisions; for with pain I add, that I think our affairs are under wretched management, and that our conduct, if Great Britain were in circumstances to take advantage of it, would bid her hope every thing, while other powers might expect little from the wisdom or exertion of these States.

I thank you for your proffered services to the eastward. I have nothing to trouble you with, but wishing you may find the air of Rhode Island salubrious and beneficial to your mother, I have the honor to be, with great esteem, &c.

TO COUNT DE ROCHAMBEAU.

Mount Vernon, 20 August, 1784.

MY DEAR COUNT,

I thank you for your favor of the 16th of June by the Marquis de Lafayette, who arrived here three days ago; and for your other letter of the 4th of May, which also came safe.* Permit me to offer you my sincere congratulations on your appointment to the government

* Lafayette arrived at New York on the 4th of August, after a passage of thirty-four days from France. He remained a short time in New York, to receive the congratulations of the citizens, and also in Philadelphia, and then hastened forward to Mount Vernon, which place he reached on the 17th. He stayed there twelve days, and then returned to Baltimore, where a public address was presented to him in behalf of the citizens, followed by an elegant entertainment and other demonstrations of respect and joy.

of Picardy. It is an honorable testimony of the approbation of your Prince, and a just reward of your services and merit. Should fortune ever put it in my power to come to France, your being at Calais would be an irresistible inducement for me to make it a visit.

... My letters from Philadelphia, public and private, would give you a full account of every matter and thing respecting the Society of the Cincinnati, and upon what footing all claims to the order were thereafter to be decided. To these referring, I shall save you the trouble of reading a repetition. Considering how recently the King of Sweden has changed the form of the government of that country, it is not so much to be wondered at, that his fears should get the better of his liberality, as to any thing which might have the semblance of republicanism; but when it is further considered, how few of his nation had, or could have, a right to the order, I think he might have suffered his complaisance to overcome them.*

I will not trouble you with a long letter at this time, because I have nothing worthy of communication. Mrs. Washington, always pleased with your recollection of her, and glad to hear of your health, prays you to accept her compliments and best wishes. Mine are always sincere and (though unknown) offered to Madame de Rochambeau, the Viscount your son, and any of the officers of the army you commanded in America, whom you may see, and with whom I have the honor of an acquaintance. With great esteem and regard,

I am, dear Sir, &c.

---

* The King of Sweden had declined permitting the officers in the French army, who were his subjects, and who had been in America, to wear the order of the Cincinnati, on the ground that the institution had a republican tendency not suited to his government.

TO THE CHEVALIER DE LA LUZERNE.

Mount Vernon, 20 August, 1784.

SIR,

The letter your Excellency did me the honor to write, in the moment of your departure from this country, conferred the highest honor upon me; and it is not more flattering to my vanity, than it is deserving of my gratitude. I shall ever reflect with pleasure, Sir, on the readiness with which your communications to me have been made, and the despatch and ability with which you have conducted business in the line to which I was called; and what will render these reflections more precious is, that you have accompanied them with marks of friendship and confidence, as pleasing as they were honorable.

When I add, Sir, that you have impressed me with sentiments of sincere respect and attachment, I do not speak the language of my own heart only; it is the universal voice, and your departure will always be regretted. The only consolation left us is, that you are gone to receive the smiles and approbation of a prince, who knows full well how to distinguish and how to reward merit.

It would give me great pleasure to make you a visit in France; to pay my respectful homage to a sovereign, to whom America is so much indebted; and to renew the friendships, which I have had the honor to contract with so many respectable characters of your nation. But I despair; my fortune has been injured by the war, and my private concerns are so much deranged, as to require more time to recover them, than comports with the years of a man, who is sliding down the stream of life as fast as I am. But whether I am in this or that country, or wheresoever

I may be, nothing will lessen the respect, or shake the attachment, with which I have the honor to be, dear Sir, yours, &c.*

TO BENJAMIN HARRISON, GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA.

Mount Vernon, 10 October, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

Upon my return from the western country a few days ago, I had the pleasure to receive your favor of the 17th ultimo. It has always been my intention to pay my respects to you, before the chance of another early and hard winter should make a warm fireside

---

* General Washington left Mount Vernon on the 1st of September, on his tour to the western country, and was absent till the 4th of October, when he again reached home. The results of his observations during his tour will be found in his letter to Governor Harrison, which follows in the text.

It was his original purpose to go down the Ohio as far as the Great Kenhawa, but he changed his design after arriving at the Monongahela, where he was informed of the disquietude of the Indians.

"My tour to the westward," said he, in a letter to Mr. Jacob Read, "was less extensive than I intended. The Indians, from accounts, were in too dissatisfied a mood for me to expose myself to their insults, as I had no object in contemplation, which could warrant any risk. My property in that country having previously undergone every kind of attack and diminution, which the nature of it would admit, to see the condition of my lands, which were nearest and settled, and to dispose of those, which were more remote and unsettled, was all I had in view. The first I accomplished; the other I could not; and I returned three weeks sooner than I expected." — *November 3d.*

This tour was performed on horseback, and the whole distance travelled was six hundred and eighty miles. He crossed the mountains by the usual route of Braddock's Road, but returned through the wild and unsettled country, which is watered by the different branches of the Cheat River, and came into the Shenandoah Valley near Staunton. He kept a journal, in which were minutely recorded his conversations with every intelligent person, whom he met, respecting the facilities for internal navigation afforded by the rivers, which have their sources among the Allegany Mountains, and flow thence either to the east or the west.

too comfortable to be relinquished. And I shall feel an additional pleasure in offering this tribute of friendship and respect to you, by having the company of the Marquis de Lafayette, when he shall have revisited this place from his eastern tour, now every day to be expected.

I shall take the liberty now, my dear Sir, to suggest a matter, which would (if I am not too short-sighted a politician) mark your administration as an important era in the annals of this country, if it should be recommended by you and adopted by the Assembly.

It has long been my decided opinion, that the shortest, easiest, and least expensive communication with the invaluable and extensive country back of us would be by one or both of the rivers of this State, which have their sources in the Apalachian mountains. Nor am I singular in this opinion. Evans, in his Map and Analysis of the Middle Colonies, which, considering the early period at which they were given to the public, are done with amazing exactness, and Hutchins since, in his Topographical Description of the western country, a good part of which is from actual surveys, are decidedly of the same sentiments; as indeed are all others, who have had opportunities, and have been at the pains, to investigate and consider the subject.

But that this may not now stand as mere matter of opinion and assertion, unsupported by facts (such at least as the best maps now extant, compared with the oral testimony, which my opportunities in the course of the war have enabled me to obtain), I shall give you the different routes and distances from Detroit, by which all the trade of the northwestern parts of the united territory must pass; unless the Spaniards, contrary to their present policy, should engage part of

it, or the British should attempt to force nature, by carrying the trade of the Upper Lakes by the River Utawas into Canada, which I scarcely think they will or could effect. Taking Detroit then (which is putting ourselves in as unfavorable a point of view as we can be well placed in, because it is upon the line of the British territory,) as a point by which, as I have already observed, all that part of the trade must come, it appears from the statement enclosed, that the tide waters of this State are nearer to it by one hundred and sixty-eight miles, than those of the River St. Lawrence; or than those of the Hudson at Albany, by one hundred and seventy-six miles.

Maryland stands upon similar ground with Virginia. Pennsylvania, although the Susquehanna is an unfriendly water, much impeded, it is said, with rocks and rapids, and nowhere communicating with those, which lead to her capital, has it in contemplation to open a communication between Toby's Creek, which empties into the Allegany River ninety-five miles above Fort Pitt, and the west branch of the Susquehanna, and to cut a canal between the waters of the latter and the Schuylkill; the expense of which is easier to be conceived, than estimated or described by me. A people, however, who are possessed of the spirit of commerce, who see and who will pursue their advantages, may achieve almost any thing. In the mean time, under the uncertainty of these undertakings, they are smoothing the roads and paving the ways for the trade of that western world. That New York will do the same as soon as the British garrisons are removed, which are at present insurmountable obstacles in their way, no person, who knows the temper, genius, and policy of those people as well as I do, can harbour the smallest doubt.

Thus much with respect to rival States. Let me now take a short view of our own; and, being aware of the objections which are in the way, I will, in order to contrast them, enumerate them with the advantages.

The first and principal one is, the *unfortunate jealousy*, which ever has, and it is to be feared ever will prevail, lest one part of the State should obtain an advantage over the other parts, as if the benefits of the trade were not diffusive and beneficial to all. Then follows a train of difficulties, namely, that our people are already heavily taxed; that we have no money; that the advantages of this trade are remote; that the most direct route for it is through other States, over which we have no control; that the routes over which we have control are as distant as either of those which lead to Philadelphia, Albany, or Montreal; that a sufficient spirit of commerce does not pervade the citizens of this commonwealth; and that we are in fact doing for others, what they ought to do for themselves.

Without going into the investigation of a question, which has employed the pens of able politicians, namely, whether trade with foreigners is an advantage or disadvantage to a country, this State, as a part of the confederated States, all of which have the spirit of it very strongly working within them, must adopt it, or submit to the evils arising therefrom without receiving its benefits. Common policy, therefore, points clearly and strongly to the propriety of our enjoying all the advantages, which nature and our local situation afford us; and evinces clearly, that, unless this spirit could be totally eradicated in other States as well as in this, and every man be made to become either a cultivator of the land or a manufacturer of such articles as are prompted by necessity, such stimulus should be employed as will *force* this spirit, by showing to our

countrymen the superior advantages we possess beyond others, and the importance of being upon an equal footing with our neighbours.

If this is fair reasoning, it ought to follow as a consequence, that we should do our part towards opening the communication for the fur and peltry trade of the Lakes, and for the produce of the country which lies within, and which will, so soon as matters are settled with the Indians, and the terms on which Congress mean to dispose of the land, found to be favorable, are announced, be settled faster than any other ever was, or any one would imagine. This, then, when considered in an interested point of view, is alone sufficient to excite our endeavours. But in my opinion there is a political consideration for so doing, which is of still greater importance.

I need not remark to you, Sir, that the flanks and rear of the United States are possessed by other powers, and formidable ones too; nor how necessary it is to apply the cement of interest to bind all parts of the Union together by indissoluble bonds, especially that part of it, which lies immediately west of us, with the middle States. For what ties, let me ask, should we have upon those people? How entirely unconnected with them shall we be, and what troubles may we not apprehend, if the Spaniards on their right, and Great Britain on their left, instead of throwing stumbling-blocks in their way, as they now do, should hold out lures for their trade and alliance? What, when they get strength, which will be sooner than most people conceive (from the emigration of foreigners, who will have no particular predilection towards us, as well as from the removal of our own citizens), will be the consequence of their having formed close connexions with both or either of those powers, in a commercial way?

It needs not, in my opinion, the gift of prophecy to foretell.

The western States (I speak now from my own observation) stand as it were upon a pivot. The touch of a feather would turn them any way. They have looked down the Mississippi, until the Spaniards, very impolitically I think for themselves, threw difficulties in their way; and they looked that way for no other reason, than because they could glide gently down the stream; without considering, perhaps, the difficulties of the voyage back again, and the time necessary to perform it in; and because they have no other means of coming to us but by long land transportations and unimproved roads. These causes have hitherto checked the industry of the present settlers; for, except the demand for provisions, occasioned by the increase of population, and a little flour, which the necessities of the Spaniards compel them to buy, they have no incitements to labor. But smooth the road, and make easy the way for them, and then see what an influx of articles will be poured upon us; how amazingly our exports will be increased by them, and how amply we shall be compensated for any trouble and expense we may encounter to effect it.

A combination of circumstances makes the present conjuncture more favorable for Virginia, than for any other State in the Union, to fix these matters. The jealous and untoward disposition of the Spaniards on one hand, and the private views of some individuals, coinciding with the general policy of the court of Great Britain, on the other, to retain as long as possible the posts of Detroit, Niagara, and Oswego, (which, though done under the letter of the treaty, is certainly an infraction of the spirit of it, and injurious to the Union,) may be improved to the greatest advantage by this

State, if she would open the avenues to the trade of that country, and embrace the present moment to establish it. It only wants a beginning. The western inhabitants would do their part towards its execution. Weak as they are, they would meet us at least half way, rather than be driven into the arms of foreigners, or be made dependent upon them; which would eventually either bring on a separation of them from us, or a war between the United States and one or the other of those powers, most probably with the Spaniards.

The preliminary steps to the attainment of this great object would be attended with very little expense, and might, at the same time that it served to attract the attention of the western country, and convince the wavering inhabitants of our disposition to connect ourselves with them, and facilitate their commerce with us, be a means of removing those jealousies, which otherwise might take place among ourselves.

These, in my opinion, are, to appoint commissioners, who, from their situation, integrity, and abilities, can be under no suspicion of prejudice or predilection to one part more than to another. Let these commissioners make an actual survey of James River and the Potomac from tide-water to their respective sources; note with great accuracy the kind of navigation and the obstructions, the difficulty and expense attending the removal of these obstructions, the distances from place to place through their whole extent, and the nearest and best portage between these waters and the streams capable of improvement, which run into the Ohio; traverse these in like manner to their junction with the Ohio, and with equal accuracy. The navigation of the Ohio being well known, they will have less to do in the examination of it; but, never-

theless, let the courses and distances be taken to the mouth of the Muskingum, and up that river (notwithstanding it is in the ceded lands) to the carrying-place to the Cayahoga; down the Cayahoga to Lake Erie; and thence to Detroit. Let them do the same with Big Beaver Creek, although part of it is in the State of Pennsylvania; and also with the Scioto. In a word, let the waters east and west of the Ohio, which invite our notice by their proximity, and by the ease with which land transportation may be had between them and the Lakes on one side, and the Rivers Potomac and James on the other, be explored, accurately delineated, and a correct and connected map of the whole be presented to the public. These things being done, I shall be mistaken if prejudice does not yield to facts, jealousy to candor, and, finally, if reason and nature, thus aided, do not dictate what is right and proper to be done.

In the mean while, if it should be thought that the lapse of time, which is necessary to effect this work, may be attended with injurious consequences, could not there be a sum of money granted towards opening the best, or, if it should be deemed more eligible, two of the nearest communications (one to the northward and another to the southward) with the settlements to the westward; and an act be passed, if there should not appear a manifest disposition in the Assembly to make it a public undertaking, to incorporate and encourage private adventurers, if any should associate and solicit the same, for the purpose of extending the navigation of the Potomac or James River; and, in the former case, to request the concurrence of Maryland in the measure? It will appear from my statement of the different routes (and, as far as my means of information have extended, I have done it with the utmost candor), that all the produce of the

settlements about Fort Pitt can be brought to Alexandria by the Youghiogany in three hundred and four miles, whereof only thirty-one are land transportation; and by the Monongahela and Cheat Rivers in three hundred and sixty miles, twenty of which only are land carriage. Whereas the common road from Fort Pitt to Philadelphia is three hundred and twenty miles, all land transportation; or four hundred and seventy-six miles, if the Ohio, Toby's Creek, Susquehanna, and Schuylkill are made use of for this purpose. How much of this is by land, I know not; but, from the nature of the country, it must be very considerable. How much the interest and feelings of people thus circumstanced would be engaged to promote it, requires no illustration.

For my own part, I think it highly probable, that, upon the strictest scrutiny, if the Falls of the Great Kenhawa can be made navigable, or a short portage be had there, it will be found of equal importance and convenience to improve the navigation of both the James and Potomac. The latter, I am fully persuaded, affords the nearest communication with the Lakes; but James River may be more convenient for all the settlers below the mouth of the Great Kenhawa, and for some distance perhaps above and west of it; for I have no expectation, that any part of the trade above the Falls of the Ohio will go down that river and the Mississippi, much less that the returns will ever come up them, unless our want of foresight and good management is the occasion of it. Or, upon trial, if it should be found that these rivers, from the before-mentioned Falls, will admit the descent of sea-vessels, in that case, and the navigation of the former becoming free, it is probable that both vessels and cargoes will be carried to foreign markets and sold; but the returns for them will

never in the natural course of things ascend the long and rapid current of that river, which with the Ohio to the Falls, in their meanderings, is little if any short of two thousand miles. Upon the whole, the object in my estimation is of vast commercial and political importance. In this light I think posterity will consider it, and regret, if our conduct should give them cause, that the present favorable moment to secure so great a blessing for them was neglected.

One thing more remains, which I had like to have forgotten, and that is, the supposed difficulty of obtaining a passage through the State of Pennsylvania. How an application to its legislature would be relished, in the first instance, I will not undertake to decide; but of one thing I am almost certain, such an application would place that body in a very delicate situation. There are in the State of Pennsylvania at least one hundred thousand souls west of the Laurel Hill, who are groaning under the inconveniences of a long land transportation. They are wishing, indeed they are looking, for the improvement and extension of inland navigation; and, if this cannot be made easy for them to Philadelphia (at any rate it must be long), they will seek a mart elsewhere; the consequence of which would be, that the State, though contrary to the interests of its sea-ports, must submit to the loss of so much of its trade, or hazard not only the loss of the trade but the loss of the settlement also; for an opposition on the part of government to the extension of water transportation, so consonant with the essential interests of a large body of people, or any extraordinary impositions upon the exports or imports to or from another State, would ultimately bring on a separation between its eastern and western settlements; towards which there is not wanting a disposition at this

moment in that part of it beyond the mountains. I consider Rumsey's discovery for working boats against the stream, by mechanical powers principally, as not only a very fortunate invention for these States in general, but as one of those circumstances, which have combined to render the present time favorable above all others for fixing, if we are disposed to avail ourselves of them, a large portion of the trade of the western country in the bosom of this State irrevocably.

Long as this letter is, I intended to have written a fuller and more digested one, upon this important subject; but have met with so many interruptions since my return home, as almost to have precluded my writing at all. What I now give is crude; but if you are in sentiment with me, I have said enough; if there is not an accordance of opinion, I have said too much; and all I pray in the latter case is, that you will do me the justice to believe my motives are pure, however erroneous my judgment may be in this matter, and that I am, with the most perfect esteem and friendship,

Dear Sir, yours, &c.*

TO GEORGE CLINTON, GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK.

Mount Vernon, 25 November, 1784.

MY DEAR SIR,

A few days ago I had the pleasure to receive your favor of the 12th instant. Although I felt pain from your silence, I should have imputed that silence to any

* Governor Harrison replied; — "I was in great hopes of seeing you here before this, that I might acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 10th of last month in person, and tell you how much I approve of your plan for opening the navigation of the western waters. The letter was so much more explicit than I could be, that I took the liberty to lay it before the Assembly, who appear so impressed with the utility of the

cause, rather than a diminution of friendship. I feel this passion for you too strongly implanted in my own breast, to harbour a suspicion of it in yours, where I flatter myself it is reciprocal, unless I had done something to deserve it, of which I am not conscious.

It gives me great pleasure to learn from yourself, that the State over which you preside is tranquil. Would to God it may ever remain so, and that all others may follow the example. Internal dissensions, and jarring with our neighbours, are not only productive of mischievous consequences as respects ourselves, but have a tendency to lessen our national character and importance in the eyes of European powers. If any thing can, this will, expose us to their intriguing politics, and may shake the Union.

It has been my avowed and uniform opinion, ever since the interview between Baron Steuben and General Haldimand last year, that, whilst a pretext could be found, the western posts would be withheld from us; and I do not think I should hazard a false prediction, were I to add, that they never will come into our hands in the condition they now are. When pretexts can no longer put on the garb of decency, a season may be named for the surrender, of which it would be impracticable for us to avail ourselves; and the Indians during that period may reduce them to ashes. I wish it may be otherwise, but these are my opinions.

It gave pain to Mrs. Washington and myself to hear of Mrs. Clinton's indisposition, and the sickness and accidents with which your little flock have been afflicted. Our best and sincere wishes are offered for them, and we hope shortly to hear of their perfect

---

measure, that I dare say they will order the survey you propose immediately, and will at their next sitting proceed to carry the plan into execution." — *Richmond, November 13th.*

restoration, as we have a most affectionate regard for them all, and feel ourselves interested in every thing which concerns them.

I am sorry we have been disappointed in our expectation of the mineral spring at Saratoga; and of the purchase of that part of the Oriskany tract, on which Fort Schuyler stands; but I am very glad you have succeeded upon such advantageous terms in the purchase of six thousand acres adjoining; for you certainly have obtained it amazingly cheap. Be so good, my dear Sir, along with the other information you have kindly promised me, to signify whether you have any prospect of borrowing, on interest, money for the payment of my moiety, as was talked of between us, or whether I am to provide it in any other manner, that I may take measures accordingly. The time is also come for the payment of interest due on the old score, and I shall do it with as little delay as possible.

Give me leave now, my dear Sir, to thank you for your recollection of and attention to the small articles, which I prayed you to provide for me. Whenever you conceive the season is proper, and an opportunity offers, I shall hope to receive the balsam trees, or any others which you may think curious and exotic with us, as I am endeavouring to improve the grounds about my house in this way. If perchance the sloop Pilgrim is not yet sailed from your port, you would add to the favor you mean to confer on me, by causing a number of grape vines, sent to me by an uncle of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, brought over by Captain Williams, and deposited by him in the garden of Mr. Beekman near the city of New York, to be forwarded by that vessel. They consist of a variety of the most valuable eating grapes in France. A list of the kinds, and the distinctions of them, no doubt accompanied them. I pray

you to take some of each sort for your own use, and offer some to Mr. Beekman.

I thank you for the interest you take in the welfare of my nephew, and for his letter, which you were so obliging as to send me. Poor fellow! his pursuit after health is, I fear, altogether fruitless. Ever since the month of May he has been traversing the seas from island to island, but hitherto to very little effect. When he last wrote, he was about to sail for Charleston, where he proposed to spend the winter, and, if no salutary effects should be derived from it, to come hither in the spring and resign himself to his fate.

Mrs. Washington unites in affectionate regards for you, Mrs. Clinton, and family; and with every sentiment of friendship and respect, I am, &c.

P. S. Tell Walker, that Mrs. Washington and I join in congratulating him on his matrimonial connexion, and hope he will enjoy all the comforts and pleasures, which are to be derived from a *good* wife.*

---

* At the date of this letter, General Washington had just returned from Richmond, whither he had been to meet the Marquis de Lafayette, and also to promote in the legislature of Virginia his views for a plan of internal navigation. He arrived there on the 15th of November. The next morning the House of Assembly passed the following resolution.

"Resolved, *nemine contradicente*, that, as a mark of their reverence for his character, and affection for his person, a committee of five members be appointed to wait upon him with the respectful regards of this House; to express to him the satisfaction they feel in the opportunity afforded by his presence, of offering this tribute to his merit; and to assure him, that, as they not only retain the most lasting impressions of the transcendent services rendered in his late public character, but have since his return to private life experienced proofs, that no change of situation can turn his thoughts from the welfare of his country, so his happiness can never cease to be an object of their most devout wishes and fervent supplications.

"Mr. Henry, Mr. Madison, Mr. Jones, Mr. C. H. Harrison, and Mr. Carrington are appointed a committee."

To the committee of five members, who were the bearers of this re-

TO DR. MESMER.

Mount Vernon, 25 November, 1784.

SIR,

The Marquis de Lafayette did me the honor of presenting to me your favor of the 16th of June, and of entering into some explanation of the powers of magnetism; the discovery of which, if it should prove as extensively beneficial as it is said it will, must be fortunate indeed for mankind, and redound very highly to the honor of that genius to whom it owes its birth. For the confidence reposed in me by the Society, which you have formed for the purpose of diffusing all the advantages expected, and for your favorable sentiments of me, I pray you to receive my gratitude, and the assurances of the respect and esteem, with which I have the honor to be, Sir, &c.

TO J. MANDRILLON, AT AMSTERDAM.

Mount Vernon, 25 November, 1784.

SIR,

I have had the honor to receive your favor of the 11th of June, accompanied with your *Remarks and Inquiries concerning America.* The honorable mention, which you make of me in both, is far above my de-

---

solve, and of whom Patrick Henry was chairman, General Washington replied;

"GENTLEMEN,

"My sensibility is deeply affected by this distinguished mark of the affectionate regard of your honorable House. I lament, on this occasion, the want of those powers which would enable me to do justice to my feelings, and shall rely upon your indulgent report to supply the defect; at the same time I pray you to present, for me, the strongest assurances of unalterable affection and gratitude, for this last pleasing and flattering attention of my country."

serts, and to be ascribed more to your politeness than to my merits. On my gratitude, however, you have a powerful claim; at the same time that it is a matter of regret to me, that my want of knowledge in the French language will not allow me to become acquainted with all the beauties of your *Spectator*. I must pray you to do me the justice to believe, that I am, Sir, &c.*

TO THE MARCHIONESS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 25 November, 1784.

MADAM,

If my expressions were equal to my sensibility, I should, in more elegant language than I am master of, declare to you my sense of the obligation I am under for the letter you did me the honor to write to me by the Marquis de Lafayette, and thanks for this flattering instance of your regard. The pleasure I received in once more embracing my friend could only have been increased by your presence, and the opportunity I should thereby have had of paying, in my own house, the homage of my respectful attachment to his better half. I have obtained a promise, which the Marquis has ratified to Mrs. Washington, that he will use his influence to bring you with him to this country, whenever he shall visit it again. When the weight of so powerful an advocate is on our side, will you, my dear

* The original titles of the two works here mentioned are, 1. *Recherches Philosophiques sur la Découverte de l'Amérique.* — 2. *Le Spectateur Américain; ou Remarques Générales sur l'Amérique Septentrionale et sur la République des Treize Etats-Unis.* The author was a zealous friend to the cause of American liberty, and his writings show him to have been a judicious observer, and well informed on the topics, which employed his pen.

Marchioness, deny us the pleasure of your accompanying him to the shores of Columbia? In offering our mite, we can only assure you, that endeavours shall not be wanting on our part to make this new world as agreeable to you, as rural scenes and peaceful retirement are competent to.*

The Marquis returns to you with all the warmth and ardor of a newly inspired lover. We restore him to you in good health, crowned with wreaths of love and respect from every part of the Union. That his meet-

* After the Marquis de Lafayette left Mount Vernon, near the end of August, he returned to the northward, being greeted everywhere, and by all classes of people, with marked testimonials of satisfaction at seeing him again in America. From New York he ascended the Hudson to Albany, and accompanied the commissioners, who were proceeding to make a treaty with the Indians at Fort Schuyler. Thence he returned across the country to Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. At Boston he embarked on board the French frigate Nymphe, for the Chesapeake Bay. Landing at Yorktown, he went to Williamsburg and Richmond. At this latter city, on the 17th of November, he met General Washington, who had arrived a short time before. Public honors were rendered to them by the General Assembly of the State. Lafayette accompanied Washington to Mount Vernon, where he made a second visit of about a week. He was addressed by the Assembly of Maryland at Annapolis, and in that town, on the 30th of November, the two friends separated. Thence Lafayette proceeded to Trenton, where Congress was then sitting. On the 25th of December he embarked at New York for France, on board the frigate Nymphe.

Accompanying the above letter was the following brief epistle directed to a young daughter of the Marchioness.

TO MADEMOISELLE DE LAFAYETTE.

"Mount Vernon, 25 November, 1784.

"Permit me to thank my dear little correspondent for the favor of her letter of the 18th of June last, and to impress her with the idea of the pleasure I shall derive from a continuance of them. Her papa is restored to her with all the good health, paternal affection, and honors, which her tender heart could wish. He will carry a kiss to her from me (which might be more agreeable from a pretty boy), and give her assurances of the affectionate regard with which I have the pleasure of being her well-wisher.

"GEORGE WASHINGTON."

ing with you, his family, and friends may be propitious, and as happy as your wishes can make it, that you may live long together revered and beloved, and that you may transmit to a numerous progeny the virtues, which you both possess, is the fervent wish of your devoted and most respectful humble servant.

N. B. In every good wish for you Mrs. Washington sincerely joins me.

TO THE CHEVALIER DE LA LUZERNE.

Mount Vernon, 5 December, 1784.

SIR,

Your early attention to me after your arrival at the court of Versailles, amidst scenes of gayety and the gratulations of friends, does, me great honor, and excites my warmest acknowledgments. That your august sovereign, his amiable consort, and the princes his brothers, should deign to interest themselves in, and wish to be acquainted with, the circumstances of my life, is one of the most flattering incidents of it, and affects my sensibility beyond any expression I can give of my feelings. If any thing could overcome the present difficulties, which impede my desires to pay my respectful homage at your court, it would be the wish, which you say these august personages have been pleased to express to see me there, and the welcome reception I should meet from the nation at large, especially from those characters with whom I have the honor of a personal acquaintance; but I fear my vows and earnest wishes are the only tribute of respect I shall ever have it in my power to offer them in return.

It gave me great pleasure to learn from your letter of the 12th of September, that the sword, which had

been so lately sheathed, was likely to remain so for some time. Other information, according with appearances, seemed rather to indicate an approaching storm in the United Netherlands; which, in its consequences, might light the torch, that would kindle the flames of a general war in Europe. How far the policy of the British may yield to the claims of the Irish, is not for me to determine. The former, it should seem, have had too much of civil contention to engage, without some respite, in fresh broils; and the latter are too near, and too much divided among themselves, to offer effectual opposition without foreign aid, especially maritime. But I know not enough of their politics, or their expectations, to hazard an opinion respecting the issue of their disputes. That they slumbered during the favorable moment, none I think can deny; and favorable moments in war as in love, once lost, are seldom regained.

We have lately held a treaty with the Six Nations at Fort Stanwix, advantageously it is said to the United States, though the issue of it is not pleasing to the State of New York. The commissioners were by the last accounts proceeding by way of Fort Pitt to Cayahoga to a meeting of the western tribes, who every now and then have bickerings with our settlers on the Ohio, in which lives and property have been lost. At the *éclaircissement*, which is about to be had with them, it is to be hoped a proper understanding will take place, the causes of discontent be removed, and peace and amity perfectly reëstablished.

The honor of your correspondence I shall ever set a high value upon, and shall thank you for the continuation of it. The occurrences of Europe cannot come through a better informed channel, nor from a more pleasing pen. Such returns as can flow from the cottage of retirement, I will make you. These in-

deed will be inadequate; but to a mind generous as yours is, there is more pleasure in conferring than in receiving an obligation.

If, Sir, the name of your sovereign has been committed to your letter by his approbation or authority, you know how far my respectful acknowledgments are due, and can be offered with propriety. I wish not to obtrude myself, nor to step over the line, which custom has drawn. Although feeling more respect and veneration for the King and Queen of France than I have powers to utter, I should in that case rest more on your abilities to disclose them, and their goodness, than upon my own faint endeavours.* To the military characters, with whom I have the honor of an acquaintance, I present my best wishes and affectionate regards; at the same time that I never can too often repeat to you the assurances of esteem and attachment, with which I have the honor to be, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 8 December, 1784.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

The peregrination of the day in which I parted from you ended at Marlborough. The next day, bad as it was, I got home before dinner.

In the moment of our separation, upon the road as I travelled, and every hour since, I have felt all that love, respect, and attachment for you, with which length

* On this topic M. de la Luzerne said in reply; "I have executed your commissions as to his Majesty and the royal family; and the King is concerned, that your domestic affairs deprive him of the satisfaction of seeing a man, whose talents and virtues have procured the happiness of his own country, and excited the admiration of all others." — *Paris, February 15th*, 1785.

of years, close connexion, and your merits have inspired me. I often asked myself, as our carriages separated, whether that was the last sight I ever should have of you? And though I wished to say No, my fears answered Yes. I called to mind the days of my youth, and found they had long since fled to return no more; that I was now descending the hill I had been fifty-two years climbing, and that, though I was blest with a good constitution, I was of a short-lived family, and might soon expect to be entombed in the mansion of my fathers. These thoughts darkened the shades, and gave a gloom to the picture, and consequently to my prospect of seeing you again. But I will not repine; I have had my day.

Nothing of importance has occurred since I parted with you. I found my family well, and am now immersed in company; notwithstanding which, I have in haste produced a few more letters to give you the trouble of, rather inclining to commit them to your care, than to pass them through many and unknown hands.

It is unnecessary, I persuade myself, to repeat to you, my dear Marquis, the sincerity of my regards and friendship; nor have I words which could express my affection for you, were I to attempt it. My fervent prayers are offered for your safe and pleasant passage, happy meeting with Madame de Lafayette and family, and the completion of every wish of your heart; in all which Mrs. Washington joins me; as she does in compliments to Captain Grandecheau,* and the Chevalier,† of whom little Washington ‡ often speaks. With every sentiment, which is propitious and endearing, I am, &c.

---

* Commander of the frigate Nymphe.

† The Chevalier de Caraman, who accompanied Lafayette on his tour.

‡ George Washington Parke Custis, grandson of Mrs. Washington.

TO RICHARD HENRY LEE, PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.*

Mount Vernon, 14 December, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

The letter, which you did me the honor to write to me on the 20th of last month, only came to my hands by the post preceding the date of this. For the copy of the treaty held with the Six Nations, at Fort Stanwix, you will please to accept my thanks. These people have given, I think, all that the United States could reasonably have asked of them; more, perhaps, than the State of New York conceives ought to have been required from them, by any other than their own legislature.

I wish they were better satisfied. Individual States opposing the measures of the United States, encroaching upon the territory of one another, and setting up old and obsolete claims, is verifying the predictions of our enemies, and in reality is truly unfortunate. If the western tribes are as well disposed to treat with us as the northern Indians have been, and will cede a competent district of country northwest of the Ohio to answer our present purposes, it would be a circumstance as unexpected as pleasing to me; for it was apprehended, if they agreed to the latter at all, it would be reluctantly; but the example of the Six Nations, who, if they have not relinquished their claim, have pretensions to a large part of those lands, may have a powerful influence on the western gentry, and smooth the way for the commissioners, who have proceeded to Fort Pitt.

It gave me pleasure to find, by the last gazettes, that a sufficient number of States had assembled to form a

* Mr. Lee had been chosen President of Congress on the 30th of November.

Congress, and that you had been placed in the chair of it. On this event, permit me to offer my compliments of congratulation. To whatever causes the delay of this meeting may have been ascribed, it most certainly has an unfavorable aspect; contributes to lessen, already too low, the dignity and importance of the federal government, and is hurtful to our national character in the eyes of Europe.

It is said (how well founded I know not), that our Assembly have repealed their former act respecting British debts. If this be true, and the State of New York have not acted repugnantly to the terms of the treaty, the British government can no longer hold the western posts under that cover; but I shall be mistaken if they do not entrench themselves behind some other expedient to retain them, or appoint a time for surrendering them, of which we cannot avail ourselves; the probable consequences whereof will be the destruction of the works.

The Assemblies of Virginia and Maryland have now under consideration the extension of the inland navigation of the rivers Potomac and James, and opening a communication between them and the western waters. They seem fully impressed with the political as well as the commercial advantages, which would result from the accomplishment of these great objects, and I hope will embrace the present moment to put them in a train for execution. Would it not, at the same time, be worthy of the wisdom and attention of Congress to have the western waters well explored, the navigation of them fully ascertained, accurately laid down, and a complete and perfect map made of the country; at least as far westerly as the Miamies, running into the Ohio and Lake Erie, and to see how the waters of these communicate with the River St. Joseph, which empties into the Lake Michigan, and with the Wabash? For I can-

not forbear observing that the Miami village, in Hutchins's map, if it and the waters are laid down with accuracy, points to a very important post for the Union. The expense attending such an undertaking could not be great, the advantages would be unbounded; for sure I am, nature has made such a display of her bounties in those regions, that the more the country is explored, the more it will rise in estimation, consequently the greater will the revenue be to the Union.

Would there be any impropriety, do you think, Sir, in reserving for special sale all mines, minerals, and salt springs, in the general grants of land from the United States? The public, instead of the few knowing ones, might in that case receive the benefits, which would proceed from the sale of them, without infringing any rule of justice that occurs to me, or their own laws; but, on the contrary, inflict just punishment upon those, who in defiance of the latter have dared to create enemies to disturb the public tranquillity, by roaming over the country, marking and surveying the valuable spots in it, to the great disquiet of the western tribes of Indians, who have viewed these proceedings with jealous indignation. To hit upon a happy medium price for the western lands, for the prevention of monopoly on one hand, and not discouraging useful settlers on the other, will, no doubt, require consideration; but ought not, in my opinion, to employ too much time before the terms are announced. The spirit of emigration is great. People have got impatient, and, though you cannot stop the road, it is yet in your power to mark the way; a little while, and you will not be able to do either. It is easier to prevent than to remedy an evil. I shall be very happy in the continuation of your correspondence; and, with sentiments of great esteem and respect, I have the honor to be, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Annapolis, 23 December, 1784.

My dear Marquis,

You would scarcely expect to receive a letter from me at this place. A few hours before I set out for it, I as little expected to cross the Potomac again this winter, or even to be fifteen miles from home before the 1st of April, as I did to make you a visit in an air-balloon in France.

I am here, however, with General Gates, at the request of the Assembly of Virginia to fix matters with the Assembly of this State respecting the extension of the inland navigation of the Potomac, and the communication between it and the western waters; and I hope a plan will be agreed upon, to the mutual satisfaction of both States, and to the advantage of the Union at large.

It gave me pain to hear, that the frigate Nymphe grounded in her passage to New York. We have various accounts of this unlucky accident; but I hope she has received no damage, and that your embarkation is not delayed by it.* The enclosed came to my hand under cover of the letter which accompanies it, and which is explanatory of the delay it has met with. I can only repeat to you assurances of my best wishes for an agreeable passage and happy meeting with Madame de Lafayette and your family, and of the sincere attachment and affection, with which I am, &c.

P. S. You and your heirs male are made citizens of this State † by an act of Assembly. You will have an official account of it. This is by the by.

* The Nymphe ran aground on the West Bank, but was got off without essential injury.

† Maryland. He was also naturalized in the State of Virginia. — See Hening's *Statutes*, Vol. XII. p. 30.

TO BENJAMIN HARRISON.

Mount Vernon, 22 January, 1785.

MY DEAR SIR,

It is not easy for me to decide by which my mind was most affected upon the receipt of your letter of the 6th instant, surprise or gratitude.* Both were greater than I have words to express. The attention and good wishes, which the Assembly have evidenced by their act for vesting in me one hundred and fifty shares in the navigation of the rivers Potomac and James, are more than mere compliment. There is an unequivocal and substantial meaning annexed. But believe me, Sir, notwithstanding this, no circumstance has happened to me since I left the walks of public life, which has so much embarrassed me.

On the one hand, I consider this act, as I have already observed, as a noble and unequivocal proof of the good opinion, the affection, and disposition of my

* *From Mr. Harrison's Letter.* — "It gives me great pleasure to inform you, that the Assembly yesterday, without a dissenting voice, complimented you with fifty shares in the Potomac Company, and one hundred in the James River Company; of which I give you this early notice to stop your subscribing on your own account. As this compliment is intended by your country in commemoration of your assiduous cares to promote her interest, I hope you will have no scruples in accepting the present, and thereby gratifying them in their most earnest wishes." — *Richmond, January 6th.*

The preamble to the act expresses the object of the legislature in making the donation. It runs thus. "It is the desire of the representatives of this commonwealth to embrace every suitable occasion of testifying their sense of the unexampled merits of George Washington towards his country; and it is their wish in particular, that those great works for its improvement, which, both as springing from the liberty which he has been so instrumental in establishing, and as encouraged by his patronage, will be durable monuments of his glory, may be made monuments also of the gratitude of his country." The act then proceeds to vest in George Washington, and his heirs and assigns for ever, the above one hundred and fifty shares in the Potomac and James River Companies. — HENING'S *Statutes*, Vol. XI. p. 525.

country to serve me; and I should be hurt, if, by declining the acceptance of it, my refusal should be construed into disrespect or the smallest slight upon the generous intention of the country, or it should be thought that an ostentatious display of disinterestedness or public virtue was the source of refusal. On the other hand, it is really my wish to have my mind, and my actions, which are the result of reflection, as free and independent as the air; that I may be more at liberty (in things which my opportunities and experience have brought me to the knowledge of) to express my sentiments, and, if necessary, to suggest what may occur to me under the fullest conviction, that, although my judgment may be arraigned, there may be no suspicion that sinister motives had the smallest influence in the suggestion. Not content, then, with the bare consciousness of my having, in all this navigation business, acted upon the clearest conviction of the political importance of the measure, I would wish that every individual, who may hear that it was a favorite plan of mine, may know also that I had no other motive for promoting it, than the advantage of which I conceived it would be productive to the Union, and to this State in particular, by cementing the eastern and western territory together, at the same time that it will give vigor and increase to our commerce, and be a convenience to our citizens.

How would this matter be viewed, then, by the eye of the world, and what would be the opinion of it, when it comes to be related, that George Washington has received twenty thousand dollars and five thousand pounds sterling of the public money as an interest therein? Would not this in the estimation of it (if I am entitled to any merit for the part I have acted, and without it there is no foundation for the act,) deprive me of the principal thing, which is laudable in my con-

duct? Would it not in some respects be considered in the same light as a pension? And would not the apprehension of this make me more reluctantly offer my sentiments in future? In a word, under whatever pretence, and however customarily these gratuitous gifts are made in other countries, should I not thenceforward be considered as a dependent? One moment's thought of which would give me more pain, than I should receive pleasure from the product of all the tolls, were every farthing of them vested in me; although I consider it as one of the most certain and increasing estates in the country.*

I have written to you with an openness becoming our friendship. I could have said more on the subject; but I have already said enough to let you into the state of my mind. I wish to know whether the ideas I entertain occurred to, and were expressed by, any member in or out of the House. Upon the whole you may be assured, my dear Sir, that my mind is not a little agitated. I want the best information and advice to settle it. I have no inclination, as I have already observed, to avail myself of the generosity of

* The act was officially communicated to him by Patrick Henry, then governor of Virginia. To that communication he replied as follows, more than a month after the above was written, and when his mind seems to have become firmly settled in its first impressions.

"I shall ever consider this act as an unequivocal and substantial testimony of the approving voice of my country for the part I have acted on the American theatre, and shall feast upon the recollection of it as often as it occurs to me; but this is all I can or mean to do. It was my first declaration in Congress, after accepting my military appointment, that I would not receive any thing for such services as I might be able to render the cause in which I had embarked. It was my fixed determination, when I surrendered that appointment, never to hold any other office under government, by which emolument might become a necessary appendage, or, in other words, which should withdraw me from the necessary attentions, which my own private concerns indispensably required; nor to accept of any pecuniary acknowledgment for what had passed. From this resolution my mind has never swerved." — *February 27th.*

the country; nor do I wish to appear ostentatiously disinterested (for more than probably my refusal would be ascribed to this motive), nor that the country should harbour an idea, that I am disposed to set little value on her favors, the manner of granting which is as flattering as the grant is important. My present difficulties, however, shall be no impediment to the progress of the undertaking. I will receive the full and frank opinions of my friends with thankfulness. I shall have time enough between the sitting of the next Assembly to consider the tendency of the act, and in this, as in all other matters, will endeavour to decide for the best. I am, my dear Sir, &c.

TO SIR JAMES JAY.*

Mount Vernon, 25 January, 1785.

SIR,

On account of the frost, and consequent interruption of the post, your favor of the 20th of December did not come to my hands until the 17th instant. It is to be regretted, that Lady Huntington's communications were not earlier made to the several legislatures, to which they were addressed; for, if the circumstances of any will allow them to be adopted, it will be found that a year will have been lost by the delay. In some States, they must have reached the executive after the Assemblies were up; in others, they would get there towards the close of them, when fresh matters are rarely attended to; and some sessions, as in this State, are held but once a year.

---

* The brother of John Jay. He had lately returned from England, and brought propositions from the Countess of Huntington to some of the States for establishing settlements of emigrants among the Indians.

I am clearly in sentiment with her Ladyship, that Christianity will never make any progress among the Indians, or work any considerable reformation in their principles, until they are brought to a state of greater civilization; and the mode by which she means to attempt this, as far as I have been able to give it consideration, is as likely to succeed as any other, that could have been devised, and may in time effect the great and benevolent objects of her Ladyship's wishes; but that love of ease, impatience under any sort of control, and disinclination to any sort of pursuit but those of hunting and war, would discourage any person possessed of less piety, zeal, and philanthropy, than are characteristic of Lady Huntington.

Of all the States to which her Ladyship's addresses are gone, New York I believe is the only one that now possesses unlocated lands in such quantities, and so contiguous to any Indian settlement, as to subserve her plan of emigration; and whether that State can accommodate a grant to her and their satisfaction, you can determine with more precision than I. No part of the western territory of Pennsylvania is very contiguous to the habitations of the Indians; and, if I mistake not, it is besides otherwise appropriated. Virginia is not more convenient to them than Pennsylvania; and in her cession to the United States she was obliged to reserve lands northwest of the Ohio, to fulfil her own engagement to the military of the State. Nothing, then, in my opinion, can be expected from her. And North Carolina, having made a similar cession, is, I believe, equally incapacitated to grant any great quantity of land in a body, or much in parcels. It is my opinion, therefore, that Lady Huntington's proposal would come more properly before the United States, than any one or more of them individually; and it is my senti-

ment clearly, that, besides the pious and humane purposes which are in view, and of which we should never lose sight, motives of a political nature should have considerable influence, because such a migration as her Ladyship proposes must be an acquisition to any country.

There are but two reasons, which my mind suggests, that can be opposed to it. The first is, the pressing debts of the United States, which may call for all the revenue, that can be drawn from the advantageous sale of their lands, and the discontents, which might flow from discrimination, if peculiar conditions in the original purchase, or indulgences thereafter, are expected in favor of the class of settlers proposed by the plan; and, secondly, (what may have more weight) the prejudices of monarchical people, when they are unmixed with republicans, against those who have separated from them, and against their forms of government, and this too in the vicinity of the British in Canada. Whether these are to be placed in competition with the charitable design of the plan, considered in a religious point of view, or the great good which may result from the civilization of numerous tribes of savages when measured on a political scale, it becomes the wisdom of that honorable body to weigh with attention.

If they should decide in favor of the measure, valuable lands with respect to fertility of soil, salubrity of climate, and other natural advantages, might, in one body and in any quantity, be reserved for the purposes of such emigration, until the result of her Ladyship's endeavours to obtain them could be known; and this, too, either in the vicinity of the Indian towns, or at such convenient distance from them, as might be most agreeable to the emigrants, there being no settlements or appropriations (except the reservation in

favor of the Virginia line of the army) to my knowledge in all the country northwest of the Ohio, that could interfere therewith.

As I am well acquainted with the President of Congress, I will in the course of a few days write to him a private letter on this subject, giving the substance of Lady Huntington's plan, and asking his opinion of the encouragement it might be expected to receive from Congress, if it should be brought before that honorable body. You can do the same with your brother, Mr. John Jay now in Congress. None can judge better of the propriety of the measure, or give greater support to it, if it should ultimately come before the supreme council of the nation. It might lay the foundation, which would be serviceable hereafter.

Without repeating the arguments in support of the humane and benevolent intention of Lady Huntington, to christianize and reduce to a state of civilization the savage tribes within the limits of the American States, or descanting upon the advantages, which the Union may derive from the emigration, which is blended with and becomes part of the plan, I highly approve of them; and having, though concisely, touched upon the material part of your letter, it only remains for me to express my good wishes for the success of such a measure, and to assure you, that wherein I can be instrumental in its execution, my best endeavours may be commanded. I have the honor to be, &c.*

* In this place, with regard to the order of dates, may be inserted an extract from a letter written by General Washington to Mr. Æneas Lamont, who had dedicated to him a volume of poems, since it refers to an error frequently repeated in writings of authority. "It behoves me," said he to Mr. Lamont, "to correct a mistake in your printed address '*To the Patrons of the Fine Arts.*' I am not a Marshal of France, nor do I hold any commission or fill any office under that government or any other whatever."—*January 31st.* The idea, which has

TO BENJAMIN VAUGHAN, IN LONDON.

Mount Vernon, 5 February, 1785.

SIR,

I pray you to accept my acknowledgment of your polite letter of the 31st of October, and thanks for the flattering expressions contained in it. These are also due in a very particular manner to Doctor Price, for the honorable mention he has made of the American General in his excellent observations on the importance of the American Revolution, addressed "To the Free and United States of America," which I have seen and read with much pleasure.

Captain Haskell, in the ship May, arrived at Alexandria a few days ago; but a frost, which at present interrupts the navigation of the river, has prevented my sending for the chimney-piece. By the number of cases, however, I greatly fear it is too elegant and costly for my room and republican style of living. I regret exceedingly, that the politeness of your good father should have overcome my resolution, and thereby occasioned the trouble and difficulty, which this business seems to have involved. Nothing could have been more remote from my intentions, than to give this; and I earnestly, but in vain, entreated Mr. Vaughan to countermand his order for the shipment of it.

I have the honor to be, &c.

---

usually prevailed, that General Washington was a marshal of France, probably originated from the circumstance of his having commanded Count de Rochambeau while that officer was in America.

TO RICHARD HENRY LEE, PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 8 February, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

Since my last I have had the honor to receive your favors of the 26th of December and 16th of January. I have now the pleasure to inform you, that the Assemblies of Virginia and Maryland have enacted laws, of which the enclosed is a copy. They are exactly similar in both States. At the same time, and at the joint and equal expense of the two governments, the sum of six thousand six hundred and sixty-six dollars and two thirds is voted for opening and keeping in repair a road from the highest practicable navigation of this river, to that of the River Cheat, or Monongahela, as commissioners, who are appointed to survey and lay out the same, shall find most convenient and beneficial to the western settlers; and they have concurred in an application to the State of Pennsylvania for permission to open another road from Fort Cumberland to the Youghiogany, at the Three Forks, or Turkey Foot. A similar bill to the one enclosed is passed by our Assembly respecting the navigation of James River, and the communication between it and the waters of the Great Kenhawa. And the Executive has been authorized by a resolve of the Assembly to appoint commissioners, to examine and report the most convenient course for a canal between Elizabeth River and the waters of the Roanoke, with an estimate of the expense; and, if the last communication shall be found to require the concurrence of the State of North Carolina, to make application to the legislature thereof accordingly.

Towards the latter part of the year 1783, I was honored with a letter from the Countess of Huntington,

briefly reciting her benevolent intention of spreading Christianity among the tribes of Indians inhabiting our western territory, and expressing a desire for my advice and assistance to carry this charitable design into execution. I wrote to her Ladyship for answer, that it would by no means comport with the plan of retirement I had promised myself, to take an active or responsible part in this business; and that it was my belief, that there was no other way to effect her pious and benevolent design, but by first reducing these people to a state of greater civilization; but that I would give every aid in my power, consistent with that ease and tranquillity, to which I meant to devote the remainder of my life, to carry her plan into effect. Since that time I have been favored with other letters from her, and a few days ago, under cover from Sir James Jay, the papers herewith enclosed.*

* These papers presented a general outline of Lady Huntington's plan. Her primary object was to civilize and Christianize the Indians. For this end she applied to some of the States for grants of lands, on which emigrants might establish themselves; and it seems to have been her design to encourage the emigration of people, whose character and habits she should approve, by effectual pecuniary contributions. Humanity and religion were her only motives. Schools were to be established, and religious instruction provided for, under such regulations as to produce the best practical results; and the arts of life were to be taught, and the means of civilization communicated, by the example of the settlers, and by such direct efforts as should be deemed suited to the great purposes in view.

Local and political reasons prevented Lady Huntington's plan from being carried into effect. Congress had pledged all the wild lands for a specific object, and the States had ceded their lands to the Union, and of course had none to appropriate for such a purpose. The answer from Mr. Lee to the above letter will explain this point in regard to Congress. "At the same time your packet reached me," said he, "there came one to Congress from Governor Henry, with her Ladyship's letter and plan enclosed, which the Governor strongly recommended. It was presently observed, that the terms upon which lands had been ceded to the United States did not leave it in the power of Congress to dispose of them for any other purpose, than for paying the debts of the pub-

As the plan contemplated by Lady Huntington, according to the outlines exhibited, is not only unexceptionable in its design and tendency, but has humanity and charity for its object, and may, I conceive, be made subservient to valuable political purposes, I take the liberty of laying the matter before you for your free and candid sentiments thereon. The communication I make of this matter to you, Sir, is in a private way; but you are at full liberty to communicate the plan of Lady Huntington to the members individually, or officially to Congress, as the importance and propriety of the measure may strike you. My reasons for it are these. First, I do not believe that any of the States to which she has written, unless it may be New York, are in circumstances, since their cession of territory, to comply with the requisitions respecting emigration; but it has been privately hinted to me, and ought not to become a matter of public notoriety, that, notwithstanding the indefinite expressions of the address respecting the number and occupations of the emigrants, which were designed to avoid giving alarms in England, the former will be great, and the useful artisans among them many. Secondly, because such emigration, if it should effect the object in view, besides the humane and charitable purposes, which would be thereby answered, will be of immense political consequence; and even if this should not succeed to her Ladyship's

---

lic by a full and fair sale of all the ceded lands. It was indeed remarked, that those religious people, whom her Ladyship had in prospect to transport and fix on our frontier, were remarkable in the late war for a unanimous and bitter enmity to the American cause, and might form a dangerous settlement at so great a distance, contiguous to the Indians, and easily accessible to Canada; especially in the present very unfriendly temper of mind, that we now suppose the British nation possesses with respect to us. It was therefore ordered, that Governor Henry's letter with the enclosures should be filed, and nothing more be done in the affair."—*New York, February 27th.*

wishes, it must nevertheless be of considerable importance from the increase of population by orderly and well-disposed characters, who would at once form a barrier, and attempt the conversion of the Indians without involving an expense to the Union.

I see but one objection to a compact, unmixed, and powerful settlement of this kind, if it is likely to be so, of the weight of which you will judge. It is (and her Ladyship seems to have been aware of it, and endeavours to guard against it,) the placing of a people in a body upon our exterior, where they will be contiguous to Canada, who may bring with them strong prejudices against us and our form of government, and equally strong attachments to the country and institutions they leave, without the means (being detached and unmixed with citizens of different sentiments) of having them eradicated.

Her Ladyship has spoken so feelingly and sensibly on the religious and benevolent purposes of the plan, that no language of which I am possessed can add aught to enforce her observations. And no place bids so fair to answer her views, as that spot in Hutchins's Map, marked Miami Village and Fort. From thence there is a communication to all parts by water; and in my opinion we ought there to have a post.

Do not think it strange, my good Sir, that I send you the original papers from Lady Huntington. Many mistakenly think I am retired to ease, and that kind of tranquillity which would grow tiresome for want of employment; but at no period of my life, not in the eight years I served the public, have I been obliged to write so much myself, as I have done since my retirement. Were this confined to friendly communications and to my own business, it would be equally pleasing and trifling; but I have a thousand references

of old matters, with which I ought not to be troubled, but which, nevertheless, must receive some answer. These, with applications for certificates, copies of orders, &c., deprive me of my usual and necessary exercise. I have tried, but hitherto in vain, to get a secretary, or clerk, to take upon him the drudging part of this business. That you might not wonder at my parting with original papers on an important subject, I thought it incumbent upon me to assign the reason; and I beg you to be assured, that I have no other motive for it.*

Please to accept my thanks for the pamphlet you sent to me, and for the resolutions respecting the temporary and permanent seat of government. If I might be permitted to hazard an opinion of the latter, I would say, that, by the time your federal buildings on the banks of the Delaware, along the point of a

* He wrote in a similar strain to General Knox. "It is not the letters from my friends," said he, "which give me trouble, or add aught to my perplexity. It is references to old matters, with which I have nothing to do; applications which oftentimes cannot be complied with; inquiries which would require the pen of a historian to satisfy; letters of compliment, as unmeaning perhaps as they are troublesome, but which must be attended to; and the commonplace business, which employs my pen and my time, often disagreeably. Indeed these, with company, deprive me of exercise, and, unless I can obtain relief, must be productive of disagreeable consequences."—*January 5th.* This labor and perplexity continued, however; for it was not till more than a year afterwards, that he employed a secretary. While negotiating for this object, he wrote to Mr. Tench Tilghman, describing the qualifications of the person he desired, and the duties he would be expected to perform. "The purposes for which I want him," said he, "are, to write letters agreeably to what shall be dictated; to do all other writing which shall be entrusted to him; keep accounts; examine, arrange, and properly methodize my papers, which are in great disorder; ride at my expense to do such business as I may have in this or other States; and to initiate two little children in the first rudiments of education."—*June 2d.* These were the two youngest children of the late Mr. Custis, who had been adopted by General Washington. At this time one was six and the other four years old.

triangle, are fit for the reception of Congress, it will be found that they are very improperly placed for the seat of the empire, and will have to undergo a second erection in a more convenient one. If the Union continues, and this is not the case, I will agree to be classed among the false prophets, and suffer for evil prediction. The letter for the Marquis de Lafayette, I pray you to forward by the packet. With great esteem and regard, I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGTON.

Mount Vernon, 27 February, 1785.

My Lady,

The very polite and obliging letter, which you did me the honor to write to me on the 8th of April by Sir James Jay, never came to my hands until the 17th of last month; and this is the best apology I can make for a silence, which might otherwise appear inattentive, if not disrespectful, to a correspondence which does me much honor.

With respect to your humane and benevolent intentions towards the Indians, and the plan which your Ladyship has adopted to carry them into effect, they meet my highest approbation, and I should be very happy to find every possible encouragement given to them. It has been my opinion, since I have had opportunities to observe and to reflect upon the ignorance, indolence, and general pursuits of the Indians, that all attempts to reclaim them and introduce any system of religion or morality would prove fruitless, until they could be first brought into a state of greater civilization; at least, that this attempt should be accompanied by the other, and be enforced by example;

and I am happy to find that it is made the groundwork of your Ladyship's plan.

With respect to the other parts of the plan, and the prospect of obtaining lands for the emigrants, who are to be the instruments employed in the execution of it, my letter to Sir James Jay, in answer to his to me on this subject, will convey every information, which it is in my power at this time to give your Ladyship; and therefore I take the liberty of enclosing a transcript of it. Agreeably to the assurance there given, I have written fully to the President of Congress, with whom I have a particular intimacy, and transmitted copies of your Ladyship's plan, addresses, and the letter to the several States, with my approving sentiments thereon. I have informed him, that, though it comes to him as a private letter from me, it is nevertheless optional with him to make it a matter of private communication to the members individually, or officially to Congress, as his judgment shall dictate; giving it as my opinion, among other reasons, that I did not believe, that, since the cession of lands by individual States to the United States, any one of them, except New York, was in circumstances, however well inclined it might be, to carry your Ladyship's plan into effect.

What may be the result of your Ladyship's addresses to the States of North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York individually, or of my statement of the matter in a friendly way to the President of Congress for the united deliberation of the whole, is not for me to anticipate, even were I acquainted with their sentiments. I have already observed, that no one of the States, unless New York may be in circumstances to do it, can furnish good lands in a body for such emigrants, as your Ladyship seems inclined to provide for. That Congress can, if the treaty depending with

the western Indians should terminate favorably, and a cession of lands be obtained from them, which I presume is one object for holding it, is certain; and unless the reasons, which I have mentioned in my letter to Sir James Jay, should be a let or bar, I have not a doubt that they would do it; in which case, any quantity of land, within such cession or purchase, might be obtained.

If ultimately success should not attend any of these applications, I submit as a dernier resort, for your Ladyship's information and consideration, a gazette containing the terms upon which I have offered several tracts of land (the quantity of which is since increased) of my own in that country, and which lie as convenient to the western tribes of Indians, as any in that territory appertaining to an individual State; as your Ladyship may perceive by having recourse to Hutchins's, Evans's, or any other map of that country; and by being informed, that Virginia has ceded all her claim to lands northwest of the Ohio to the United States, and that the western boundary of Pennsylvania is terminated by a meridian, crossing the river but a little distance from Fort Pitt.

It will appear evident, from the date of my publication, that I could not, at the time it was promulgated, have had an eye to your Ladyship's plan of emigration; and I earnestly pray, that my communication of the matter at this time may receive no other interpretation, than what is really meant, that is, a last resort, if it should be thought an eligible one.

I have no doubt that lands, if to be had at all, may be obtained from the United States, or an individual State, upon easier terms than those upon which I have offered mine; but being equally persuaded, that those of mine, from their situation and other local advantages,

are worth what I ask, I should not incline to take less for them, unless the whole by good and responsible characters, after an agent in their behalf had previously examined into the quality and conveniency of the land, should be engaged upon either of the tenures that are published; especially as these lands, from their particular situation, must become exceedingly valuable on account of the laws, which have just passed the Assemblies of Virginia and Maryland, for improving and extending the navigation of the Potomac as high as is practicable, and communicating it with the nearest western waters by good roads, and the act of the former Assembly, to do the same thing with James River, and the communication between it and the Great Kenhawa; by means of which the produce of the settlers on these lands of mine will come easily and cheaply to market.

I am, &c.

TO WILLIAM GORDON.

Mount Vernon, 8 March, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

Since my last to you, I have been favored with several of your letters, which should not have remained so long unacknowledged, had I not been a good deal pressed by matters which could not well be delayed; and had I not found a difficulty in complying with your request respecting the profiles. The latter it is not in my power to do now satisfactorily. Some imperfect miniature cuts I send you under cover with this letter. They were designed for me by Miss D'Hart of Elizabethtown, and given to Mrs. Washington, who, in sparing them, only wishes they may answer your purpose. For her I can get none cut yet. If

M. Du Simitiere is living, and at Philadelphia, it is possible he may have miniature engravings of most if not all the military characters you want, and in their proper dresses. He drew many good likenesses from the life, and got them engraved at Paris for sale. Among these I have seen that of General Gates, Baron Steuben, and others, as also of your humble servant. The Marquis de Lafayette had left this before your request for his profile came to hand.

You ask if the character of Colonel John Laurens, as drawn in the *Independent Chronicle* of the 2d of December last, is just. I answer, that such parts of the drawing, as have fallen under my own observation, are literally so; and that it is my firm belief his merits and worth richly entitle him to the whole picture. No man possessed more of the *amor patriæ*. In a word, he had not a fault, that I ever could discover, unless intrepidity bordering upon rashness could come under that denomination; and to this he was excited by the purest motives.

The order alluded to in my private letter, a copy of which you requested, I now send. You might have observed, for I believe the same private letter takes notice thereof, that it was in consequence of a resolve of Congress, that Fort Washington was so pertinaciously held, before the ships passed that post. Without unpacking chests, and unbundling papers, I cannot come at, and give you a copy of, that resolve; but I well remember, that, after reciting the importance of securing the upper navigation of the Hudson, I am directed to obtain hulks, to sink them for the purpose of obstructing the navigation, and to spare no other cost to effect it. Owing to this, the posts of Fort Washington and Fort Lee, on account of the narrowness of the river, some peculiarity of the channel, and the strength of the

ground at those places, were laboriously fortified. Owing to this, we left Fort Washington strongly garrisoned in our rear, when we were obliged to retreat to White Plains; and owing to this, also, Colonel Magaw, who commanded at it, was ordered to defend it to the last extremity.

But when, maugre all the obstructions which had been thrown into the channel, all the labor and expense which had been bestowed on the works, and the risks we had before run as to the garrison, the British ships of war had passed, and could pass those posts, it was clear to me from that moment, that they were no longer eligible, and that the one on the east side of the river ought to be withdrawn whilst it was in our power. In consequence thereof, the letter of the 8th of November, 1776, was written to General Greene from White Plains; that post and all the troops in the vicinity of it being under his orders. I give this information, and I furnish you with a copy of the order for the evacuation of Fort Washington, because you desire it, not that I want to exculpate myself from any censure, which may have fallen on me by charging another.*

Some accounts say, that matters are in train for an accommodation between the Austrians and Dutch. If so, the flames of war may be arrested before they blaze out and become very extensive; but, admitting the contrary, I hope none of the sparks will light on American ground, which, I fear, is made of too much combustible matter for its well-being.

Your young friend is in high health, and full of spirits. I informed him I was going to write to you,

* For the resolve of Congress alluded to above, the letter to General Greene, and other particulars relating to the loss of Fort Washington, see Vol. IV. pp. 164, 178, 182; and Vol. VI. p. 328.

and desired to know if he had any commands. His spontaneous answer was, "I beg he will make haste and come here again." All the rest of the family are well, except Mrs. Washington, who is too often troubled with bilious complaints to enjoy perfect health. All join in best wishes for you and yours, with dear Sir, &c.

TO JOHN WITHERSPOON.

Mount Vernon, 8 March, 1785.

REVEREND SIR,

From the cursory manner in which you mentioned the wish of Mr. Bowie to write the memoirs of my life, I was not, at the moment of your application and my assent to it, struck with the consequences to which it tended; but, when I came to reflect upon the matter afterwards, and had some conversation with Mr. Bowie on the subject, I found that this must be a very futile work (if under any circumstances it could be made interesting), unless he could be furnished with the incidents of my life, either from my papers or my recollection, and digest the past transactions into some sort of form and order with respect to times and circumstances. I knew, also, that many of the former, relative to the part I had acted in the war between France and Great Britain, from the year 1754 until the peace of Paris, and which contained some of the most interesting occurrences of my life, were lost,* and that my

* These papers were taken at Braddock's defeat. I had the good fortune to recover the originals of the most important ones in London, being the letters to Governor Dinwiddie written previously to that event. They are published in the second volume of this work, and throw much light on the incidents in the life of Washington during his campaign of 1754, particularly the circumstances of the death of Jumonville, and the affair at the Great Meadows.

memory is too treacherous to be relied on to supply this defect; and, admitting both were more perfect, that submitting such a publication to the world, whilst I continue on the theatre, might, however involuntarily I was led into it, be ascribed to vain motives.

These considerations prompted me to tell Mr. Bowie, when I saw him at Philadelphia in May last, that I could have no agency towards the publication of any memoirs respecting myself whilst living; but as I had, when asked, given my assent to you to have them written, and as he had been the first to propose it, he was welcome, if he thought his time would not be unprofitably spent, to take extracts from such documents as yet remained in my possession, and to avail himself of any other information I could give, provided the publication should be suspended until I had quitted the stage of human action. I then intended, as I informed him, to devote the present expiring winter to arranging my papers, which I had left at home, and which I found a mere mass of confusion, occasioned by frequently shifting them into trunks, and suddenly removing them from the reach of the enemy; but, however strange it my seem, it is nevertheless true, that, what with company, references of old matters with which I ought not to be troubled, applications for certificates and copies of orders, in addition to the routine of letters, which have multiplied greatly upon me, I have not been able to touch a single paper, or transact any business of my own in the way of accounts, during the whole course of the winter; or, in a word, since my retirement from public life.

I have two reasons, my good Sir, for making these communications to you. The first is, by way of apology for not complying with my promise, in the full extent you might expect, in favor of Mr. Bowie. The

second is, not knowing where that gentleman resides, I am at a loss without your assistance to give him the information respecting the disordered state of my papers, which he was told should be arranged, and a proper selection of them made for his inspection by the spring. Upon your kindness, therefore, I must rely to convey this information to him; for, though I should be glad at all times to see Mr. Bowie here, I should be unhappy if expectations, which cannot be realized at the present moment, should withdraw him from, or cause him to forego, some other pursuits, which may be more advantageous to him. My respects, if you please, to Mrs. Witherspoon. I have the honor to be, &c.

TO HUGH WILLIAMSON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 15 March, 1785.

SIR,

It has so happened, that your favor of the 19th ultimo did not come to my hands until the last mail arrived at Alexandria. By the return of it I have the honor to address this letter to you.

Mr. McMeikens's explanation of the movements of Rumsey's boat is consonant to my ideas, and warranted by the principles upon which it acts. The small manual assistance, to which I alluded, was to be applied in still water and to the steerage. The counteraction being proportioned to the action, it must ascend a swift current faster than a gentle stream; and both, with more ease than it can move through dead water. But in the first there may be, and no doubt is, a point beyond which it cannot go without involving difficulties, which may be found insurmountable. Further than

this I am not at liberty to explain myself; but if a model, or thing in miniature, is a just representation of a greater object in practice, there is no doubt of the utility of the invention. A view of his model, with the explanation, removed the principal doubt I ever had of the practicability of propelling against a stream by the aid of mechanical power; but as he wanted to avail himself of my introduction of it to the public attention, I chose previously to see the actual performance of the model in a descending stream before I passed my certificate; and having done so, all my doubts were satisfied.

I thank you, Sir, for your account of the last Indian treaty. I had received a similar one before, but do not comprehend by which line our northern limits are to be fixed. Two things seem naturally to result from this agreement with the western Indians; the terms on which the ceded lands are to be disposed of, and the mode of settling them. The first, in my opinion, ought not to be delayed; the second ought not to be too diffusive. Compact and progressive seating will give strength to the Union, admit law, and good government, and federal aids at an early period. Sparse settlements in several new States, or a large territory for one, will have the directly contrary effects; and, whilst it opens a large field to land-jobbers and speculators, who are prowling about like wolves in many shapes, will injure the real occupiers and useful citizens, and consequently the public interest.

If a tract of country, of convenient size for a new State, contiguous to the present settlements on the Ohio, is laid off, and a certain proportion of the land seated, or at least granted, before any other State is marked out, and no land is to be obtained beyond the limits of it, we shall, I conceive, reap great political

advantages from such a line of conduct; and, without it, we may be involved in much trouble and perplexity before any new State will be well organized, or contribute any thing to the support of the Union.

I have the honor to be, &c.

TO FRANCIS HOPKINSON.

Mount Vernon, 16 May, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

In for a penny, in for a pound, is an old adage. I am so hackneyed to the touches of the painter's pencil, that I am now altogether at their beck; and sit, "like Patience on a monument," whilst they are delineating the lines of my face. It is a proof, among many others, of what habit and custom can accomplish. At first I was as impatient at the request, and as restive under the operation, as a colt is under the saddle. The next time I submitted very reluctantly, but with less flouncing. Now, no dray-horse moves more readily to his thill than I to the painter's chair. It may easily be conceived, therefore, that I yielded a ready obedience to your request and to the views of Mr. Pine.

Letters from England recommendatory of this gentleman came to my hands previous to his arrival; not only as an artist of genius and taste, but as one who had shown a very friendly disposition towards this country, for which it seems he had been marked.

It gave me pleasure to hear from you. I shall always feel an interest in your happiness; and, with Mrs. Washington's compliments and best wishes joined to my own for Mrs. Hopkinson and yourself, I am, &c.*

---

* It would seem, that Mr. Pine came to America with large designs. He stayed three weeks at Mount Vernon; and, after he went away,

TO WILLIAM GODDARD.

Mount Vernon, 11 June, 1785.

SIR,

On the 8th instant I received the favor of your letter of the 30th of May. In answer to it I can only say, that your own good judgment must direct you in the publication of the manuscript papers of General Lee. I can have no request to make concerning the work.

I never had a difference with that gentleman but on public ground, and my conduct towards him upon this occasion was such only, as I felt myself indispensably bound to adopt in discharge of the public trust reposed in me. If this produced in him unfavorable sentiments of me, I yet can never consider the conduct I pursued, with respect to him, either wrong or improper, however I may regret that it may have been differently viewed by him, and that it excited his censure and animadversions. Should there appear in General Lee's writings any thing injurious or unfriendly to me, the impartial and dispassionate world must decide how far I deserved it from the general tenor of my conduct.

I am gliding down the stream of life, and wish, as is natural, that my remaining days may be undisturbed and tranquil; and, conscious of my integrity, I would

---

General Washington said of him, in a letter to Mr. George William Fairfax, who then resided in England; "Mr. Pine has met a favorable reception in this country, and may, I conceive, command as much business as he pleases. He is now preparing materials for historical representations of some of the most important events of the war."— *June 30th.* Mr. Pine also said, in a letter to Washington; "I have been some time at Annapolis, painting the portraits of patriots, legislators, heroes, and beauties, in order to adorn my large pictures, and I expect to pass a few weeks at Baltimore employed for the same purpose."— *December 16th*, 1785. How far the artist's project was pursued, is not known, but the pictures were not finished.

willingly hope, that nothing may occur tending to give me anxiety; but should any thing present itself in this or any other publication, I shall never undertake the painful task of recrimination, nor do I know that I should even enter upon my justification. I consider the communication you have made as a mark of great attention, and the whole of your letter as a proof of your esteem. I am, &c.*

TO MAJOR-GENERAL KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 18 June, 1785.

My dear Sir,

I am quite ashamed to be so long deficient in acknowledging the receipt of your favors of the 24th and 29th of March and 5th of May; but an intervention of circumstances, with the enumeration of which I will not trouble you, has prevented it.

It gives me pleasure to hear of your appointment to the office of secretary at war. Without a compliment, I think a better choice could not have been made; and, though the salary is low, it may, under the circumstances you mention, be considered as auxiliary. The sentiment, which you have dropped respecting the appropriation of the shares, intended for me by the

---

* The manuscript papers of General Charles Lee were left by his will to Mr. Goddard, who was at this time publisher of the *Maryland Journal* in Baltimore. He issued proposals for printing the papers of General Lee in three volumes. The work never appeared. It is said, that a person, whom he had associated with him in preparing the materials for the press, betrayed his trust, and sent parts of the manuscripts to England, where they were sold for his own benefit. They afforded the groundwork of a volume first printed in London, imperfect in its arrangement and character, entitled "The Life and Memoirs of the late Major-General Charles Lee." — Thomas's *History of Printing*, Vol. II. p. 355.

Assembly of this State, in the navigation of the rivers Potomac and James, is very pleasing, and it would give me great pleasure to see it realized.*

For want of a complete view of the designs of Congress respecting the western territory, and not knowing how matters stand with Great Britain in regard to the posts of Detroit and other places at present in the occupation of British garrisons on the American side of the line, I feel myself incompetent to answer your question respecting such posts, as may be proper for the purposes you mention; but, under my present ideas of the matter, I am inclined to think, if garrisons are to be established within the limits and jurisdiction of any of the present States, that Fort Pitt, or Fort McIntosh,† whichever shall be found most convenient and in best repair, would suit very well for a post of deposit, from whence all the others should be supplied; and, as it is my opinion, that great part of the fur and peltry of the lakes, when we shall have free access to them, will be transported by the Cayahoga and Big Beaver Creek, a post at the mouth of the latter, or some convenient post on the former, must be eligible. The spot marked Miami Village and Fort in Hutchins's Map, I have always considered as of importance, being a central point between Lake Erie, Lake Michigan, and the River Ohio, communicating with each by water. To these, the Falls of Ohio, or some more convenient spot for the lower settlements, may be added. Whether this chain embraces territory enough; whether it goes far enough to the southward to afford protection to the

* A suggestion that the donation of the legislature might be appropriated with proper delicacy to the support of the widows and orphans of those men, of the Virginia line, who had sacrificed their lives in the defence of their country.

† A fort on the Ohio River twenty-five miles below Pittsburg.

back settlers of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia; or whether these objects are meant to be comprehended, it is for those, who are more behind the curtain than I am, to determine. My opinion of the matter is, that I have described a sufficient extent of the country to answer all our present purposes; beyond which neither settlements nor location of land ought to be admitted, because a larger would open a more extensive field for land-jobbers and speculators, weaken our frontiers by the sparseness of the settlements, exclude law, good government, and taxation to a late period, and injure the Union very essentially in many respects.

At the conflux of the Great Kenhawa with the Ohio a post might be established so as to answer beneficial purposes. Indeed it is the opinion of many, that it is a more eligible place than Pittsburg. In time, if the navigation of the Kenhawa should be extended, and an easy communication be had with James River, it may be so; but in the present state of things, considering the settlements about the latter, and the sources from whence proceed all the supplies of that country, it certainly is not. As a post for the protection of the river and the movements thereon, it may be desirable.

If I am right in my principles, some such distribution as the following may not be ineligible for the seven hundred men, that are ordered to be raised. At Fort Pitt, Fort McIntosh, or the mouth of the Big Beaver, being in the vicinity of a thick settlement, only one hundred men. At Cayahoga, whence a detachment might occupy the carrying-place between that water and the Big Beaver, being on the line and most exposed, I allow two hundred. At Miami Fort, or Village, and dependencies, two hundred. At the

Falls of Ohio, or some spot more convenient and healthy on that river, one hundred and fifty. At the conflux of the Great Kenhawa and the Ohio, for security of the river, protection of trade, and covering emigrants, fifty.

Mrs. Macaulay Graham,* Mr. Graham, and others, have just left us, after a stay of about ten days. A visit from a lady so celebrated in the literary world could not but be very flattering to me. Mrs. Washington joins me in best wishes for yourself, Mrs. Knox, and family. With great truth and sincerity, I am, my dear Sir, &c.

TO THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGTON.

Mount Vernon, 30 June, 1785.

MY LADY,

In the last letter, which I have had the honor to write you, I informed your Ladyship of the communication I had made to the President of Congress of your wishes to obtain lands in the western territory for a number of emigrants, as a means of civilizing the savages, and propagating the Gospel among them. In answer he informed me, that Mr. Henry, governor of this State, had laid your Ladyship's letter and plan, which were addressed to him, before Congress, in a full and ample manner; but his private opinion of the matter was, that, under the pressure of debt to which this fund was to be appropriated, and the diversity of sentiments respecting the mode of applying it, no discrimination would or indeed could be made in favor of emigrants of any description whatsoever.

---

* Better known as Mrs. Catharine Macaulay, celebrated for her History of England and other writings.

I waited, however, a considerable time to know the result of Mr. Henry's reference, before I would give your Ladyship the trouble of another letter on this subject; but hearing nothing more of the matter, and having had the enclosed resolutions and ordinance sent to me by the President himself, as the result of their long and painful deliberation on the mode of disposing of the western lands, I will delay no longer to express my concern, that your Ladyship's benevolent views are not better seconded. The resolutions and ordinance herewith enclosed, on which I shall make no comment, will give the terms and show your Ladyship the mode, by which the lands belonging to the Union are to be obtained; in other words, how difficult it must be for foreigners to know when or where to apply for them. With the highest respect and consideration,

I have the honor to be, &c.

TO DAVID HUMPHREYS.

Mount Vernon, 25 July, 1785.

My dear Humphreys,

Since my last to you, I have received your letter of the 15th of January, and, I believe, that of the 11th of November, and thank you for them. It always gives me pleasure to hear from you; and I should think, if *amusements* would spare you, business could not so much absorb your time as to prevent your writing more frequently, especially as there is a regular conveyance once a month by the packet.

As the complexion of European politics seems now (by letters I have received from the Marquis de Lafayette, the Chevalier de Chastellux, the Chevalier de la Luzerne, and others,) to have a tendency to peace, I

will say nothing of war, nor make any animadversions upon the contending powers; otherwise I might possibly have said, that the retreat from it seemed impossible after the explicit declaration of the parties. My first wish is to see this plague to mankind banished from the earth, and the sons and daughters of this world employed in more pleasing and innocent amusements, than in preparing implements and exercising them for the destruction of mankind. Rather than quarrel about territory, let the poor, the needy, and oppressed of the earth, and those who want land, resort to the fertile plains of our western country, the *second land of promise*, and there dwell in peace, fulfilling the first and great commandment.

In a former letter I informed you, my dear Humphreys, that if I had talents for it, I have not leisure to turn my thoughts to Commentaries. A consciousness of a defective education, and a certainty of the want of time, unfit me for such an undertaking. What with company, letters, and other matters, many of them quite extraneous, I have not been able to arrange my own private concerns so as to rescue them from that disordered state into which they have been thrown by the war, and to do which is become absolutely necessary for my support whilst I remain on this stage of human action. The sentiments of your last letter on this subject gave me great pleasure. I should be pleased indeed to see you undertake this business. Your abilities as a writer, your discernment respecting the principles which led to the decision by arms, your personal knowledge of many facts as they occurred in the progress of the war, your disposition to justice, candor, and impartiality, and your diligence in investigating truth, all combining, fit you, when joined with the vigor of life, for this task. I should with great

pleasure, not only give you the perusal of all my papers, but any oral information of circumstances, which cannot be obtained from these, that my memory will furnish; and I can with great truth add, that my house would not only be at your service during the period of your preparing this work, but (I say it without an unmeaning compliment) I should be exceedingly happy if you would make it your home. You might have an apartment to yourself, in which you would command your own time. You would be considered and treated as one of the family, and meet with that cordial reception and entertainment, which are characteristic of the sincerest friendship.

To send back European news would be idle, and we have little of a domestic kind worthy of attention. We have held treaties with the Indians, but they were so unseasonably delayed, that these people, by our last accounts from the westward, are in a discontented mood, supposed by many to be instigated thereto by our late enemies (now, to be sure, fast friends), who, from any thing I can learn, under the indefinite expression of the treaty, hold and seem resolved to retain possession of our western posts. Congress have, also, after a long and tedious deliberation, passed an ordinance for laying off the western territory into States, and for disposing of the land; but in a manner and on terms, which few people in the southern States conceive can be accomplished. Both sides are sure, and the event is appealed to. Let time decide it. It is however to be regretted, that local politics and self-interested views obtrude themselves into every measure of public utility.

My attention is more immediately engaged in a project, which I think big with great political, as well as commercial consequences to the States, especially the middle ones; it is by removing the obstructions and

extending the inland navigation of our rivers, to bring the States on the Atlantic in close connexion with those forming to the westward, by a short and easy transportation. Without this, I can easily conceive they will have different views, separate interests, and other connexions. I may be singular in my ideas, but they are these; that, to open a door to, and make easy the way for, those settlers to the westward (who ought to advance regularly and compactly) before we make any stir about the navigation of the Mississippi, and before our settlements are far advanced towards that river, would be our true line of policy. It can, I think, be demonstrated, that the produce of the western territory, (if the navigations which are now in hand succeed, of which I have no doubt,) as low down the Ohio as the Great Kenhawa, and I believe to the Falls, and between the parts above the Lakes, may be brought either to the highest shipping port on the Potomac or James river, at a less expense, with more ease, including the return, and in a much shorter time, than it can be carried to New Orleans, if the Spaniards, instead of restrictions, were to throw open their ports and invite our trade. But if the commerce of that country should embrace this channel, and connexions be formed, experience has taught us, and there is a very recent proof with great Britain, how next to impracticable it is to divert it; and, if that should be the case, the Atlantic States, especially as those to the westward will in a great degree be filled with foreigners, will be no more to the present Union, except to excite perhaps very justly our fears, than the country of California is, which is still more to the westward, and belonging to another power.

Mrs. Washington presents her compliments to you, and with every wish for your happiness,

I am, my dear Humphreys, &c.

TO EDMUND RANDOLPH.

Mount Vernon, 30 July, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

Although it is not my intention to derive any pecuniary advantage from the generous vote of the Assembly of this State, in consequence of its gratuitous gift of shares in the navigation of each of the rivers Potomac and James; yet, as I consider these undertakings of vast political and commercial importance to the States on the Atlantic, especially to those nearest the centre of the Union, and adjoining the western territory, I can let no act of mine impede the progress of the work. I have therefore come to the determination to hold the shares, which the treasurer was directed to subscribe for on my account, in trust for the use and benefit of the public; unless I should be able to discover, before the meeting of the Assembly, that it would be agreeable to it to have the product of the tolls arising from these shares applied as a fund, on which to establish two charity schools, one on each river, for the education and support of the children of the poor in this country, particularly the children of those men of this description, who have fallen in the defence of the rights and liberties of it. If the plan succeed, of which I have no doubt, I am sure it will be a very productive and increasing fund, and the moneys thus applied will be a beneficial institution.

I am aware that my non-acceptance of these shares will have various motives ascribed to it, among which an ostentatious display of disinterestedness, perhaps the charge of disrespect or slight of the favors of my country, may lead the van; but under a consciousness, that my conduct herein is not influenced by considerations of this nature, and that I shall act more agreeably to

my own feelings, and more consistently with my early declarations, by declining to accept them, I shall not only hope for indulgence, but a favorable interpretation of my conduct. My friends, I persuade myself, will acquit me; the world, I hope, will judge charitably.

Perceiving by the advertisements of Messrs. Cabell, Buchanan, and Southall, that half the sum required by the act, for opening and extending the navigation of James River, is subscribed, and the 20th of next month appointed for the subscribers to meet at Richmond, I take the liberty of giving you a power to act for me on that occasion. I would (having the accomplishment of this navigation much at heart) have attended in person, but the president and directors of the Potomac company, by their own appointment, are to commence the survey of this river in the early part of next month; for which purpose I shall leave home to-morrow. I am, Sir, &c.

TO RICHARD HENRY LEE, PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 22 August, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

In my absence with the directors of the Potomac navigation, to examine the river and fix a plan of operations,* your favor, begun on the 23d and ended on the 31st of July, came to this place. I am sorry

* The object of this tour was to inspect minutely the course of the Potomac from Georgetown to Harper's Ferry, and ascertain in what places and to what extent it was necessary to construct canals and remove obstructions in the river. The directors went up by land, part of the distance on one side and part on the other; but they returned from Harper's Ferry to the head of the Great Falls above Georgetown in boats; thus effecting a thorough examination of the river. General Washington, as usual wherever he moved, attracted the attention of the

to hear of your late indisposition, but congratulate you on your recovery, hoping the reëstablishment of your health may be of long continuance.

The packet, which you were so obliging as to send, came safe, and I thank you for your care of it; but for want of a knowledge of the language, I can form no opinion of the dramatic performance. The current of my information from France is, that the dispute between the Emperor and Holland will be accommodated without bloodshed; but after the explicit declarations, which have been made on both sides, I do not see how either (especially the first) can recede from their claims. To save appearances, and to let the contending parties down handsomely, say some of my betters, is now the greatest difficulty; but all agree that a spark may set the whole in flames. Indeed Bavaria, it is expected, will do this.

It is to be hoped, that our minister at the court of London will bring that government to an explanation respecting the western posts, which it still retains on the American side of the line, contrary to the spirit, if not the letter of the treaty. My opinion from the first, and so I declared it, was, that these posts would be

---

people and demonstrations of respect for his person. The following is an extract from his *Diary*.

"*August 5th.* — After breakfast, and after directing Mr. Rumsey, when he had marked the way and set the laborers at work, to meet us at Harper's Ferry, myself and the directors set out for the same place by way of Fredericktown in Maryland. Dined at a Dutchman's two miles above the mouth of the Monococy, and reached Fredericktown about five o'clock. Drank tea, supped, and lodged at Governor Johnson's. In the evening the bells rang and guns were fired; and a committee waited upon me by order of the gentlemen of the town to request, that I would stay the next day and partake of a public dinner, which the town were desirous of giving me. But, as arrangements had been made, and the time for examining the Shenandoah Falls, previously to the day fixed for receiving laborers into pay, was short, I found it most expedient to decline the honor."

detained from us as long as they could be held under any pretence whatsoever. I have not changed it, though I wish for cause to do so, as it may become a serious matter. However singular the opinion may be, I cannot divest myself of it, that the navigation of the Mississippi, *at this time*, ought to be no object with us. On the contrary, until we have a little time allowed to open and make easy the ways between the Atlantic States and the western territory, the obstructions had better remain. There is nothing which binds one country or one State to another but interest. Without this cement the western inhabitants, who more than probably will be composed in a great degree of foreigners, can have no predilection for us, and a commercial connexion is the only tie we can have upon them. It is clear to me, that the trade of the Lakes, and of the River Ohio, as low as the Great Kenhawa if not to the Falls, may be brought to the Atlantic ports easier and cheaper, taking the whole voyage together, than it can be carried to New Orleans; but, once open the door to the latter before the obstructions are removed from the former, let commercial connexions, which lead to others, be formed, and the habit of that trade be well established, and it will be found to be no easy matter to divert it; and *vice versâ*. When the settlements are stronger and more extended to the westward, the navigation of the Mississippi will be an object of importance, and we shall then be able, reserving our claims, to speak a more efficacious language, than policy, I think, dictates at present.*

* In writing on this subject to M. de Marbois, who had spoken of a rencounter between the Spaniards at Fort Natchez and the inhabitants in that neighbourhood, General Washington said; "I wish something disagreeable may not result from the contentions respecting the navigation of the River Mississippi. The emigration to the waters thereof is

I never have heard, and I hope never shall hear, any serious mention of a paper emission in this State; yet such a thing may be in agitation. Ignorance and design are productive of much mischief. The former is the tool of the latter, and is often set to work suddenly and unexpectedly. Those, with whom I have conversed on the subject in this part of the State, reprobate the idea exceedingly.*

We have lately had the pleasure of Miss Lee's and Miss Hannah's company at this place. They were both well five days ago. Mrs. Washington prays you to accept her compliments; and with sentiments of great respect, esteem, and regard, I am, &c.

P. S. Your name, I well remember, stands among those of the subscribers for a share in the Potomac navigation.

---

astonishingly great, and chiefly by a description of people, who are not very subordinate to the laws and constitution of the States they go from. Whether the prohibition of the Spaniards, therefore, is just or unjust, politic or impolitic, it will be with difficulty, that people of this class can be restrained from the enjoyment of natural advantages." — *June 18th.*

* The following question and sentiments were contained in Mr. Lee's letter, to which this is an answer.

"Is it possible that a plan can be formed for issuing a large sum of paper money by the next Assembly? I do verily believe, that the greatest foes we have in the world could not devise a more effectual plan for ruining Virginia. I should suppose, that every friend to his country, every honest and sober man, would join heartily to reprobate so nefarious a plan of speculation."

The sentiments of George Mason on the same subject, may be seen in the following extract from a letter written by him to General Washington at a somewhat later date. "I have heard nothing from the Assembly," said he, "except vague reports of their being resolved to issue a paper currency; upon what principle or funds I know not; perhaps upon the old threadbare security of pledging solemnly the public credit. I believe such an experiment would prove similar to the old vulgar adage of carrying a horse to the water. They may pass a law to issue it, but twenty laws will not make the people receive it." — *November 9th.*

TO JAMES M^CHENRY, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 22 August, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

Your letter of the 1st instant came to this place whilst I was absent on a tour up the river, or an earlier acknowledgment of it should have been sent to you. The enclosure shall, either by this or the next post, be sent to Dr. Gordon for his information, and that justice may be done to a character so deserving American gratitude and the pen of a historian, as the Marquis de Lafayette.*

I am very glad to hear, that Congress are relieved from the embarrassment, which originated with Longchamps. Had the demand of him been persisted in, it might have involved very serious consequences; it is better for the court of France to be a little vexed, than for it to have persevered in the demand of him.

As I have ever been a friend to adequate powers of Congress, without which it is evident to me we never shall establish a national character, or be considered as on a respectable footing by the powers of

* During a part of the war, Mr. M^cHenry had been one of Lafayette's aids-de-camp, and he had recently drawn up a memoir containing an account of the services of that officer in the United States. General Washington transmitted that memoir to Dr. Gordon, and wrote;

"As I am fully persuaded it is your wish to transmit to posterity a true history of the revolution, and that of course you desire to receive every information, which will enable you to do justice to the principal actors therein, it cannot be unpleasing to you to receive a narrative of unadorned facts, which serves to bring forward circumstances, which, in some measure, may be unknown to you. I therefore make no apology for transmitting the enclosed, nor shall I do more than hint to you the propriety of keeping the Marquis's wishes in this business behind the curtain. Your own good sense must dictate the measure, and furnish the reason for it. The noble, conspicuous, and disinterested part, which this nobleman has acted on the American theatre, deserves all the gratitude this country can render him, and all the eulogy which the pen of a faithful historian can bestow." — *August 31st.*

Europe, I am sorry I cannot agree with you in sentiment not to enlarge them for the regulating of commerce. I have neither time nor abilities to enter into a full discussion of this subject; but it would seem to me, that your arguments against it, principally that some States may be more benefited than others by a commercial regulation, apply to every matter of general utility. Can there be a case mentioned, in which this argument has not its force in a greater or less degree? We are either a united people under one head and for federal purposes, or we are thirteen independent sovereignties, eternally counteracting each other. If the former, whatever such a majority of the States, as the constitution points out, conceives to be for the benefit of the whole, should, in my humble opinion, be submitted to by the minority. Let the southern States always be represented; let them act more in union; let them declare freely and boldly what is for the interest of, and what is prejudicial to, their constituents; and there will, there must be, an accommodating spirit. In the establishment of a navigation act, this in a particular manner ought, and will doubtless be attended to. If the assent of nine States, or as some propose of eleven, is necessary to give validity to a commercial system, it insures this measure, or it cannot be obtained.

Wherein then lies the danger? But if your fears are in danger of being realized, cannot certain provisos in the ordinance guard against the evil? I see no difficulty in this, if the southern delegates would give their attendance in Congress, and follow the example, if it should be set them, of adhering together to counteract combinations. I confess to you candidly, that I can foresee no evil greater than disunion; than those unreasonable jealousies, (I say *unreasonable*, because I

would have a *proper* jealousy always awake, and the United States on the watch to prevent individual States from infracting the constitution with impunity,) which are continually poisoning our minds and filling them with imaginary evils for the prevention of real ones.

As you have asked the question, I answer, I do not know that we can enter upon a war of imposts with Great Britain, or any other foreign power; but we are certain, that this war has been waged against us by the former; professedly upon a belief that we never could unite in opposition to it; and I believe there is no way of putting an end to, or at least of stopping the increase of it, but to convince them of the contrary. Our trade, in all points of view, is as essential to Great Britain, as hers is to us; and she will exchange it upon reciprocal and liberal terms, if better cannot be had. It can hardly be supposed, I think, that the carrying business will devolve wholly on the States you have named, or remain long with them if it should; for either Great Britain will depart from her present contracted system, or the policy of the southern States in framing the act of navigation, or by laws passed by themselves individually, will devise ways and means to encourage seamen for the transportation of the products of their respective countries. But, admitting the contrary, if the Union is considered as permanent, and on this I presume all superstructures are built, had we not better encourage seamen among ourselves, with less imports, than divide them with foreigners, and by increasing the amount of them ruin our merchants, and greatly injure the mass of our citizens.

To sum up the whole, I foresee, or think I do, the many advantages which will arise from giving powers of this kind to Congress (if a sufficient number of States are required to exercise them), without any evil,

save that which may proceed from inattention, or want of wisdom in the formation of the act; whilst, without them, we stand in a ridiculous point of view in the eyes of the nations of the world, with whom we are attempting to enter into commercial treaties, without the means of carrying them into effect; who must see and feel, that the Union or the States individually are sovereigns, as best suits their purposes; in a word, that we are one nation to-day and thirteen to-morrow. I will only add, that Mrs. Washington offers her compliments and best wishes for you, and that with great esteem and regard, I am, dear Sir, &c.*

TO WILLIAM GRAYSON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 22 August, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

During my tour up the Potomac River with the directors, to examine and to form a plan for opening and extending the navigation of it, agreeably to the acts of the Virginia and Maryland Assemblies, your favor of the 25th came to this place, with the letters brought by the son of Mr. Adams from France, for your care of which I thank you. *Apropos*, did you hear him say any thing of hounds, which, the Marquis de Lafayette has written to me, were committed to his care? If he really brought them (and if he did not I am unable to account for the information), it would have been civil in the young gentleman to drop me a line respecting the disposal of them; especially as war is declared against the canine species in New York, and they, being

* See the letter, to which the above is an answer, and the propositions on the same subject as discussed in Congress and the legislature of Virginia, in the APPENDIX, No. II.

strangers and not having formed any alliances for self-defence, but on the contrary distressed and friendless, may have been exposed, not only to war, but to pestilence and famine also. If you can say any thing on this subject, pray do so.*

I thank you for the several articles of intelligence contained in your letter, and for the propositions respecting a coinage of gold, silver, and copper; a measure, which, in my opinion, has become indispensably necessary. Mr. Jefferson's ideas upon this subject are plain and simple; well adapted, I think, to the nature of the case, as he has exemplified it by the plan.† Without a coinage, or unless some stop can be put to the cutting and clipping of money, our dollars, pistareens, &c., will be converted, as Teague says, into *five* quarters; and a man must travel with a pair of scales in his pocket, or run the risk of receiving gold at one fourth less by weight than it counts.

I have ever been a friend to adequate congressional powers; consequently I wish to see the ninth article of the confederation amended and extended. Without these powers we cannot support a national character, and must appear contemptible in the eyes of Europe. But to you, my dear Sir, I will candidly confess, that in

* To this inquiry Mr. Grayson replied. "The hounds arrived here in the midst of a hot war against their fraternity. They were not, however, friendless. Your acquaintance, Dr. Cochran, took very good care of them whilst they remained at this place, and has sent them by Captain Packard's sloop to Mount Vernon." — *September 5th.*

† This plan was the one which has since been carried into use. Mr. Jefferson took the dollar as a *unit*, and then divided it decimally for the other denominations. He wrote a memoir on the subject for the consideration of Congress. — JEFFERSON'S *Writings*, Vol. I. p. 133. A very ingenious scheme had been previously devised by Gouverneur Morris, founded on similar principles; but, as a different *unit* was adopted, the notation was less simple. — SPARKS'S *Life of Gouverneur Morris*, Vol. I. pp. 273–281.

my opinion it is of little avail to give them to Congress. The members seem to be so much afraid of exerting those, which they already have, that no opportunity is slipped of surrendering them, or referring the exercise of them to the States individually. Instance your late ordinance respecting the disposal of the western lands, in which no State with the smallest propriety could have obtruded an interference. No doubt but the information of Congress from the back country is better than mine, respecting the operations of this ordinance; but I have understood from some sensible people, that, besides running they know not where to purchase, the lands are of so versatile a nature, that, to the end of time, they will not, by those who are acquainted therewith, be purchased either in townships or by square miles. This, if I recollect right, was the sentiment I delivered to you, on the first mention of the matter; but past experience, you said, was brought forward in support of the measure, and appealed to for the issue. I submitted therefore to its decision, but still retained my opinion.

We have got the Potomac navigation in hand. Workmen are employed, under the best manager and assistants we could obtain, at the Falls of Shenandoah and Seneca; and I am happy to inform you, that, upon a critical examination of them by the directors, the manager, and myself, we are unanimously of opinion, that the difficulties at these two places do not exceed the expectations we had formed of them; and that the navigation through them might be effected without the aid of locks. How far we may have been deceived with respect to the first, as the water though low may yet fall, I shall not decide; but we are not mistaken, I think, in our conjectures of the other. With very great esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO ARTHUR ST. CLAIR.

Mount Vernon, 31 August, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 21st ultimo, enclosing a letter written in behalf of the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Pennsylvania on the 9th of July in the preceding year, came to this place in my absence on a tour up the river Potomac.

I am perfectly convinced, that, if the first institution of this Society had not been parted with, ere this we should have had the country in an uproar, and a line of separation drawn between this Society and their fellow-citizens. The alterations, which took place at the last general meeting, have quieted the clamors, which in many of the States were rising to a great height; but I have not heard yet of the incorporation of any Society by the State to which it belongs, which is an evidence, in my mind, that the jealousies of the people are rather asleep than removed on this occasion.

I am always made happy when I hear that any of my fellow-laborers have received appointments, that may in some measure compensate them for their past services and losses in the late revolution. I feel it in two respects; first, as it benefits the individual; and next, as it is a testimony of public gratitude. Be assured then, my dear Sir, that your appointment to the office, which you now hold, gave me much pleasure, as I am told the emoluments of it are handsome. My best wishes will ever attend you. With sincere esteem and regard, I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 1 September, 1785.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

Since my last to you, I have been favored with your letters of the 11th and 13th of May by young Mr. Adams, who brought them to New York, from whence they came safely to this place by the post. The first is a cipher, and for the communications therein contained I thank you. My best wishes will always accompany your undertakings; but remember, my dear friend, it is a part of the military art to reconnoitre and feel your way before you engage too deeply. More is oftentimes effected by regular approaches than by an open assault. From the former, too, you may make a good retreat; from the latter, in case of repulse, it rarely happens.

It is to be hoped, that Mr. Adams will bring the British ministry to some explanation respecting the western posts. Nothing else can, I conceive, disturb the tranquillity of these States; but, if I am mistaken in this conjecture, you know my sentiments and friendship for you too well to doubt my inclination to serve you to the utmost of your wishes and my powers.

It gives me very singular pleasure to find the court of France relaxing in their demand of Longchamps. To have persisted in it would have been a very embarrassing measure to this country, under the laws and constitution of the federal government, and those of the several parts which compose it.*

* Longchamps was a Frenchman, who in May, 1784, had assaulted M. de Marbois, the French consul-general and secretary of legation, in the streets of Philadelphia, and at the house of the French minister. This act being a violation of the law of nations, Longchamps was arrested, tried by the courts of Pennsylvania, found guilty, and sentenced

The hounds, which you were so obliging as to send, arrived safe, and are of promising appearance. To Monsieur le Comte Doilliamson (if I miscall him, your handwriting is to blame, and in honor you are bound to rectify the error), and in an especial manner to his fair Comtesse, my thanks are due for this favor. The enclosed letter, which I give you the trouble of forwarding, contains my acknowledgment of their obliging attention to me on this occasion.

If I recollect right, the letter, which was written by the Marquis de St. Simon, was on the business of the Cincinnati, and was laid before the general meeting at Philadelphia in May, 1784; consequently the answer must have proceeded from the Society, either especially to him, or generally through the Counts d'Estaing and Rochambeau, who were written to as the heads of the naval and military members of that Society in France. But, as all the papers relative to the business of the Society were deposited in the care of the secretary, General Knox, or the assistant secretary, Williams, I have them not to refer to, but will make inquiry, and will inform you or the Marquis de St. Simon more particularly of the result.

Your constant attention, and unwearied endeavours to serve the interests of these United States, cannot fail to keep alive in them a grateful sensibility, and the affectionate regard of all their citizens for you. The

to pay a fine of one hundred crowns, and to be imprisoned for a limited time. The sentence was put in execution; but in the mean time the King of France demanded Longchamps as a French subject, and required that he should be sent to France and tried by the laws of his own country. Congress resisted this claim, as inconsistent with the dignity of an independent government, it being the right of every such government to punish all offences committed against the laws within its jurisdiction. For a short time the controversy threatened serious consequences; but the French King relaxed from his demand, Longchamps suffered the penalty inflicted by the judicial tribunal of Pennsylvania, and the difficulty ceased.

footing, on which you have established a market for whale oil, must be equally pleasing and advantageous to the States, which are more immediately engaged in that commerce.

When George* returns from the Springs and gets a little fixed, I will set him about copying your letters to me, which will be better than to hazard the originals at sea, where an accident might occasion the loss of them to both of us. In my last I informed you of his intended marriage, which I suppose will take place in the early part of next month. I am, &c.

TO M. DE MARBOIS.

Mount Vernon, 25 September, 1785.

SIR,

I have had the honor to receive yours of the 14th from New York. At the moment I congratulate you on your late appointment, and this fresh instance of his Most Christian Majesty's attention to your merits, I cannot but express my sorrow that you are so near the eve of your departure from America. I shall remember with pleasure, Sir, the friendship you have always expressed for me, and with gratitude shall recollect the many instances of your partiality and attention towards me. I should receive with great satisfaction the account of your safe arrival at Hispaniola, and of every other event which can be interesting and pleasing to you; being with much truth, and great esteem and regard, Sir, your most obedient, &c.†

---

* George Augustine Washington, nephew to General Washington.

† M. de Marbois had been promoted to the office of Intendant of the Island of Hispaniola. He had resided in the United States six years, first as secretary of legation under the Chevalier de la Luzerne, next

TO BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Mount Vernon, 25 September, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

Amid the public gratulations on your safe return to America, after a long absence and the many eminent services you have rendered it, for which as a benefited person I feel the obligation, permit an individual to join the public voice in expressing a sense of them; and to assure you, that, as no one entertains more respect for your character, so no one can salute you with more sincerity, or with greater pleasure, than I do on the occasion. With the highest regard and greatest consideration, I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Mount Vernon, 26 September, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

I had just written, and was about to put into the hands of Mr. Taylor, a gentleman in the department of the secretary of foreign affairs, the enclosed letter, when I had the honor to receive by post your favor of the 20th instant. I have a grateful sense of the partiality of the French nation towards me, and feel very sensibly the indulgent expression of your letter, which does me great honor.

When it suits M. Houdon to come hither, I will accommodate him in the best manner I am able, and shall endeavour to render his stay as agreeable as I can.* It would give me infinite pleasure to see you.

---

as consul-general, and afterwards as Chargé d'Affaires from the court of France.

* In compliance with a request of the Governor of Virginia, Mr. Jef-

At this place I dare not look for it; though to entertain you under my own roof would be doubly gratifying. When or whether I shall ever have the satisfaction of seeing you at Philadelphia is uncertain, as retirement from the public walks of life has not been so productive of leisure and ease as might have been expected. With very great esteem and respect, I am, dear Sir, your most obedient, &c.

TO M. HOUDON.

Mount Vernon, 26 September, 1785.

SIR,

By a letter, which I have lately had the honor to receive from Dr. Franklin at Philadelphia, I am informed of your arrival at that place. Many letters from very respectable characters in France, as well as the Doctor's, inform me of the occasion; for which, though the cause is not of my seeking, I feel the most agreeable and grateful sensations. I wish the object of your mission had been more worthy of the masterly genius of the first statuary in Europe; for thus you are represented to me.

It will give me pleasure, Sir, to welcome you to this seat of my retirement; and whatever I have, or can procure, that is necessary to your purposes, or convenient and agreeable to your wishes, you must freely command, as inclination to oblige you will be

---

ferson and Dr. Franklin had engaged M. Houdon in Paris to come to America and take from the life an exact resemblance of General Washington's person, for the purpose of executing the statue that had been ordered to be erected by the Virginia legislature. Some interesting facts on this subject are contained in JEFFERSON'S *Writings*, Vol. I. pp. 232, 248, 249, 253. Houdon crossed the Atlantic in the same vessel with Dr. Franklin.

among the last things in which I shall be found deficient, either on your arrival or during your stay.

With sentiments of esteem, I am, Sir, &c.

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Mount Vernon, 26 September, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

I had the honor to receive your favors of the 10th and 17th of July, which were committed to the care of M. Houdon; but I have not yet had the pleasure to see that gentleman. His instruments and materials, Doctor Franklin informs me, were sent down the Seine; but, not being arrived when the ship left Havre, he was obliged to leave them, and is now busied in supplying himself with others at Philadelphia, with which, when done, he will come to this place. I shall take great pleasure in showing M. Houdon every civility and attention in my power during his stay in this country; for I feel myself under personal obligations to you and Dr. Franklin (as the State of Virginia has done me the honor to direct a statue to be erected to my memory) for having placed the execution in the hands of so eminent an artist, and so worthy a character.

I am very happy to find, that your sentiments respecting the interest the Assembly was pleased to give me in the navigation of the Potomac and James Rivers coincide with my own. I never for a moment entertained an idea of accepting it. The difficulty, with which my mind labored, was how to refuse without giving offence. Ultimately I have it in contemplation to apply the profits arising from the tolls to some public use. In this, if I knew how, I would meet the wishes of the Assembly; but, if I am not able to come at these,

my own inclination leads me to apply them to the establishment of two charity schools, one on each river, for the education and support of poor children, especially the descendants of those, who have fallen in defence of their country.

I can say nothing decisively respecting the western settlement of this State. The inhabitants of Kentucky have held several conventions, and have resolved to apply for a separation; but what may be the final issue of it, is not for me to inform you. Opinions, as far as they have come to my knowledge, are diverse. I have uniformly given it as mine, to meet them upon their own ground, draw the best line and make the best terms we can, and part good friends. After the next session of our Assembly, more may be learned and communicated; and, if you should not receive it through a better channel, I will have the honor to inform you.

I am sorry that I cannot give you full information respecting Bushnell's projects for the destruction of ships. No interesting experiments having been made, and my memory being bad, I may in some measure be mistaken in what I am about to relate. Bushnell is a man of great mechanical powers, fertile in inventions and master of execution. He came to me in 1776, recommended by Governor Trumbull and other respectable characters, who were converts to his plan. Although I wanted faith myself, I furnished him with money and other aids to carry his plan into execution. He labored for some time ineffectually; and, though the advocates for his schemes continued sanguine, he never did succeed. One accident or another always intervened. I then thought, and still think, that it was an effort of genius, but that too many things were necessary to be combined, to expect much from the issue against an enemy, who are always upon guard.

That he had a machine so contrived, as to carry him under water at any depth he chose, and for a considerable time and distance, with an appendage charged with powder, which he could fasten to a ship, and give fire to it in time sufficient for his returning, and by means thereof destroy it, are facts, I believe, which admit of little doubt. But then, where it was to operate against an enemy, it was no easy matter to get a person hardy enough to encounter the variety of dangers, to which he would be exposed; first, from the novelty; secondly, from the difficulty of conducting the machine, and governing it under water, on account of the current; and thirdly, from the consequent uncertainty of hitting the object devoted to destruction, without rising frequently above water for fresh observations, which, when near the vessel, would expose the adventurer to discovery and to almost certain death. To these causes I always ascribed the failure of his plan, as he wanted nothing that I could furnish to insure the success of it. This, to the best of my recollection, is a true state of the case; but Humphreys, if I mistake not, being one of his converts, will be able to give you a more perfect account of it than I have done. With perfect esteem and regard, I have the honor to be, &c.

TO JOHN JAY, SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

Mount Vernon, 27 September, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

Mr. Taylor presented me the honor of your favor of the 25th ultimo, and gave me the pleasure of hearing that Mrs. Jay, yourself, and family were well when he left New York. Upon your safe return to your native country, after a long absence and the important ser-

vices you have rendered it in many interesting negotiations, I very sincerely congratulate you and your lady. It gave me great pleasure to hear of your late appointment as secretary of the United States for the department of foreign affairs. A happier choice, in my opinion, could not have been made; and I shall always rejoice at any circumstances, that will contribute either to your honor, interest, or convenience.

Having completed his mission, Mr. Taylor returns to you with the proceedings and report of the commissioners, who were sent into New York to inspect the embarkation, which, by the by, was little more than a farce, as they inspected no more property than the British chose they should be witness to the embarkation of.* It will always give me pleasure to hear from you. Mrs. Washington joins me in most respectful compliments, and best wishes for yourself and Mrs. Jay, and I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

TO GEORGE MASON.

Mount Vernon, 3 October, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

I have this moment received yours of yesterday's date, enclosing a memorial and remonstrance against the Assessment Bill, which I will read with attention. At present I am unable to do it, on account of company. The bill itself I do not recollect ever to have

* A minister from the United States having been recently accredited at the court of St. James, it was determined by Congress to bring before that government the subject of the loss of property by citizens of the United States at the time of the evacuation of New York, particularly that of negroes, who were allowed to embark for Nova Scotia and other places. Mr. Taylor had been sent to Mount Vernon by Mr. Jay to procure copies of important papers relating to this matter.

read; with attention I am certain I never did, but will compare them together.

Although no man's sentiments are more opposed to any kind of restraint upon religious principles than mine are, yet I must confess, that I am not amongst the number of those, who are so much alarmed at the thoughts of making people pay towards the support of that which they profess, if of the denomination of Christians, or declare themselves Jews, Mahometans, or otherwise, and thereby obtain proper relief. As the matter now stands, I wish an assessment had never been agitated, and as it has gone so far that the bill could die an easy death; because I think it will be productive of more quiet to the State, than by enacting it into a law, which in my opinion would be impolitic, admitting there is a decided majority for it, to the disquiet of a respectable minority. In the former case, the matter will soon subside; in the latter, it will rankle and perhaps convulse the State. The dinner-bell rings, and I must conclude with an expression of my concern for your indisposition. Sincerely and affectionately, I am, &c.*

* A bill had been brought into the House of Delegates in December, 1784, and twice read, for establishing a provision for teachers of the Christian religion. By the principles of the bill, a specified tax was to be collected from every person in the commonwealth subject to pay taxes for other purposes; and the money raised by virtue of this act was to be appropriated by the vestries, elders, or directors of each religious society to a provision for a minister or teacher of the gospel of their denomination, or to the providing of places of worship. Quakers and Menonists were to receive the amount collected among themselves, but they were to employ it in promoting their particular mode of worship. When the bill came up for a third reading, on the 24th of December, a motion was made to postpone it till the fourth Thursday in November, and this motion was carried by a vote of forty-five to thirty-eight. Before the time arrived, remonstrances and memorials against it were prepared, and signatures obtained from those who were opposed to the measure. The consequence seems to have been a law of a very different complexion, in the preamble of which religious freedom is asserted in its fullest lati-

TO THE MARQUIS DE LA ROUERIE.

Mount Vernon, 7 October, 1785.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter of the 19th of May was brought to this place by M. Houdon, who arrived here the 3d of this month. I delay no time to acknowledge the receipt of it, and to thank you for the several communications you have had the goodness to make. You are too well acquainted with my wishes for every thing, which can promote your interest, honor, or happiness, to suppose that I did not rejoice at the prospect of your being appointed to the command of a corps, which is agreeable to your own inclination, and which suits your talents. Whatever gratifies the former, and favors the latter, I sincerely wish you may enjoy.

At present every thing in America is tranquil, and I trust will long remain so. It is not our interest to seek new broils, and I hope our neighbours will not commence them. It is not a little mysterious, however, that the western posts on the American side of the territorial line should still be possessed by British garrisons. The mystery, it is to be presumed, will soon be explained, as an American minister has been received at the court of London.

I never expect to draw my sword again. I can scarcely conceive the cause, that would induce me to do it; but if, contrary to all expectation, such an event

---

tude, and by which it was enacted, "that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or otherwise burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to possess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities."—HENING'S *Statutes*, Vol. XII. p. 86.

should take place, I should think it a fortunate circumstance, and myself highly honored, to have it supported by yours. My time is now occupied by rural amusements, in which I have great satisfaction; and my first wish is (although it is against the profession of arms, and would clip the wings of some of your young soldiers, who are soaring after glory,) to see the whole world in peace, and the inhabitants of it as one band of brothers, striving who should contribute most to the happiness of mankind.

Mrs. Washington, thankful for your kind remembrance of her, desires me to present her compliments to you. It is unnecessary to assure you of the high esteem and regard, with which I am, &c.

TO JAMES WARREN.

Mount Vernon, 7 October, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

The assurances of your friendship, after a silence of more than six years, are extremely pleasing to me. Friendships, formed under the circumstances in which ours commenced are not easily eradicated; and I can assure you, that mine has undergone no diminution. Every occasion, therefore, of renewing it will give me pleasure, and I shall be happy at all times to hear of your welfare.

The war, as you have very justly observed, has terminated most advantageously for America, and a fair field is presented to our view; but I confess to you freely, my dear Sir, that I do not think we possess wisdom or justice enough to cultivate it properly. Illiberality, jealousy, and local policy mix too much in all our public councils for the good government of the

Union. In a word, the confederation appears to me to be little more than a shadow without the substance, and Congress a nugatory body, their ordinances being little attended to. To me it is a solecism in politics, indeed it is one of the most extraordinary things in nature, that we should confederate as a nation, and yet be afraid to give the rulers of that nation (who are the creatures of our own making, appointed for a limited and short duration, and who are amenable for every action and may be recalled at any moment, and are subject to all the evils, which they may be instrumental in producing,) sufficient powers to order and direct the affairs of the same. By such policy as this the wheels of government are clogged, and our brightest prospects, and that high expectation, which was entertained of us by the wondering world, are turned into astonishment; and, from the high ground on which we stood, we are descending into the vale of confusion and darkness.

That we have it in our power to become one of the most respectable nations upon earth, admits, in my humble opinion, of no doubt, if we would but pursue a wise, just, and liberal policy towards one another, and keep good faith with the rest of the world. That our resources are ample and increasing, none can deny; but, while they are grudgingly applied, or not applied at all, we give a vital stab to public faith, and shall sink, in the eyes of Europe, into contempt.

It has long been a speculative question among philosophers and wise men, whether foreign commerce is of real advantage to any country; that is, whether the luxury, effeminacy, and corruptions, which are introduced along with it, are counterbalanced by the convenience and wealth which it brings. But the decision of this question is of very little importance to us. We have abundant reason to be convinced, that the spirit

of trade, which pervades these States, is not to be restrained. It behoves us then to establish just principles; and this cannot, any more than other matters of national concern, be done by thirteen heads differently constructed and organized. The necessity, therefore, of a controlling power is obvious; and why it should be withheld is beyond my comprehension.

The Agricultural Society, lately established in Philadelphia, promises extensive usefulness, if its objects are prosecuted with spirit. I wish most sincerely, that every State in the Union would institute similar ones; and that these societies would correspond fully and freely with each other, and communicate to the public all useful discoveries founded on practice, with a due attention to climate, soil, and seasons.

It would afford me great pleasure to go over those grounds in your State, with a mind more at ease than when I travelled them in 1775 and 1776, and to unite in congratulation on the happy change with those characters, who participated the anxious moments we passed in those days, and for whom I entertain a sincere regard; but I do not know whether to flatter myself with the hope of such an enjoyment. The deranged state of my affairs, from an absence and total neglect of them for almost nine years, and a pressure of other matters, allow me little leisure for gratifications of this sort. Mrs. Washington offers her compliments and best wishes to Mrs. Warren, to which be pleased to add those of, dear Sir, yours, &c.

TO PATRICK HENRY, GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA.

Mount Vernon, 29 October, 1785.

SIR,

Your Excellency having been pleased to transmit to me a copy of the act, appropriating for my benefit certain shares in the companies for opening the navigation of James and Potomac Rivers, I take the liberty of returning to the General Assembly, through your hands, the profound and grateful acknowledgments inspired by so signal a mark of their beneficent intentions towards me. I beg you, Sir, to assure them, that I am filled on this occasion with every sentiment, which can flow from a heart warm with love for my country, sensible to every token of its approbation and affection, and solicitous to testify in every instance a respectful submission to its wishes.

With these sentiments in my bosom, I need not dwell on the anxiety I feel in being obliged in this instance to decline a favor, which is rendered no less flattering by the manner in which it is conveyed, than it is affectionate in itself. In explaining this observation I pass over a comparison of my endeavours in the public service with the many honorable testimonies of approbation, which have already so far overrated and overpaid them; reciting one consideration only, which supersedes the necessity of recurring to any other.

When I was first called to the station, with which I was honored during the late conflict for our liberties, to the diffidence which I had so many reasons to feel in accepting it, I thought it my duty to join a firm resolution to shut my hand against every pecuniary recompense. To this resolution I have invariably adhered, and from it, if I had the inclination, I do not feel at liberty now to depart.

Whilst I repeat, therefore, my fervent acknowledgments to the legislature for their very kind sentiments and intentions in my favor, and at the same time beg them to be persuaded, that a remembrance of this singular proof of their goodness towards me will never cease to cherish returns of the warmest affection and gratitude, I must pray that their act, so far as it has for its object my personal emolument, may not have its effect. But if it should please the General Assembly to permit me to turn the destination of the fund vested in me, from my private emolument, to objects of a public nature, it will be my study in selecting these to prove the sincerity of my gratitude for the honor conferred on me, by preferring such as may appear most subservient to the enlightened and patriotic views of the legislature. With great respect and consideration, I have the honor to be, &c.*

* After this letter had been read, the legislature passed an act withdrawing the donation, and adding, "That the said shares, with the tolls and profits hereafter accruing therefrom, shall stand appropriated to such objects of a public nature, in such manner and under such distributions, as the said George Washington, by deed during his life, or by his last will and testament, shall direct." — HENING's *Statutes*, Vol. XII. p. 44. The letter is printed in the preamble to the statute. In writing to Mr. Madison on the subject, at the time he sent the letter to the governor, he said, "Conceiving it would be better to suggest a wish, than to propose an absolute condition of acceptance, I have so expressed myself to the Assembly; and I shall be obliged to you, not only for information of the result, but (if there is an acquiescence on the part of the country) for your sentiments respecting the appropriations. From what may be said on the occasion, you will learn what will be most pleasing, and of the greatest utility to the public." — *October 29th.*

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 8 November, 1785.

My dear Marquis,

Having written fully to you about the 1st of September, and nothing having occurred since worth reciting, I should not have given you the trouble of receiving a letter from me at this time, were it not for the good opportunity afforded me by Captain Littlepage, and my desire not to suffer any of your letters to remain long by me unacknowledged.

I have now to thank you for your favors of the 9th and 14th of July; the first by M. Houdon, who stayed no more than a fortnight with me, and to whom, for his trouble and risk in crossing the seas (although I had no agency in the business), I feel myself under personal obligations; the second, giving an account of your intended tour, which, if completed in the time you propose, will exhibit a fresh instance of the celerity of your movements.* My good wishes have attended you through the whole of it; and this letter I hope will find you arrived at Paris in good health.

Doctor Franklin has met with a grateful reception in Pennsylvania. He has again embarked on a troubled ocean; I am persuaded with the best designs, and I wish his purposes may be answered, which undoubtedly are to reconcile the jarring interests of the State. He permitted himself to be nominated for the city of Philadelphia as a counsellor, a step to the chair, which no

* A tour through Prussia and Austria, which was performed by Lafayette during the present year. In a former letter General Washington had said; "My best wishes will accompany you to Potsdam and into the Austrian dominions. As an unobserved spectator I should be glad to peep at the troops of those monarchs at their manœuvrings on a grand field-day; but, as it is among the unattainable things, my philosophy shall supply the place of curiosity, and set my mind at ease." — *July 25th.*

doubt he will fill; but whether to the satisfaction of both parties is a question of some magnitude, and of real importance to himself, at least to his quiet. His grandson shall meet with every civility and attention I can show him, when occasions offer.

Your old aid George has taken to himself the wife of his choice. The honey-moon is not yet passed. When that is over, I will set him about copying your letters. I add no more at present, but the sincere and affectionate regard I bear to you, and in which Mrs. Washington and all here join; as we do in respectful compliments and best wishes for Madame de Lafayette and your little flock. It is unnecessary to tell you how much I am, my dear Marquis, yours, &c.

TO JAMES MADISON.

Mount Vernon, 30 November, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

Receive my thanks for your obliging communications of the 11th. I hear with much pleasure, that the Assembly are engaged seriously in the consideration of the revised laws. A short and simple code in my opinion, though I have the sentiments of some of the gentlemen of the long robe against me, would be productive of happy consequences, and redound to the honor of this or any country, which should adopt it. I hope the resolutions, which were published for the consideration of the House, respecting the reference to Congress for the regulation of a commercial system, will have passed.*

The proposition, in my opinion, is so self-evident, that

* See APPENDIX, No. II.

I confess I am not able to discover wherein lies the weight of objection to the measure. We are either a united people, or we are not so. If the former, let us in all matters of general concern, act as a nation which has a national character to support; if we are not, let us no longer act a farce by pretending to it; for, whilst we are playing a double game, or playing a game between the two, we never shall be consistent or respectable, but may be the dupes of some powers, and the contempt assuredly of all. In any case, it behoves us to provide good militia laws, and to look well to the execution of them; but if we mean by our conduct, that the States shall act independently of each other, it becomes indispensably necessary, for therein will consist our strength and the respectability of the Union.

It is much to be wished that public faith may be held inviolable. Painful is it, even in thought, that attempts should be made to weaken its bands. It is a dangerous experiment. Once slacken the reins, and the power is lost. And it is questionable with me, whether the advocates of the measure foresee all its consequences. It is an old adage, that *honesty is the best policy.* This applies to public as well as private life, to States as well as individuals.

I hope the Port and Assize Bills no longer sleep, but are awakened to a happy establishment. The first, with some alterations, would in my judgment be productive of great good to this country. Without it, the trade thereof, I conceive, will ever labor and languish. With respect to the second, if it institutes a speedier administration of justice, it is equally desirable.

From the complexion of the debates in the Pennsylvania Assembly, it would seem as if that legislature intended their assent to the propositions from the States of Virginia and Maryland, respecting a road to the

Youghiogany, should be on the condition that permission be given by the latter to open a communication between the Chesapeake and Delaware, by the way of the rivers Elk and Christiana; which I am sure will never be obtained, if the Baltimore interest can give effectual opposition. The directors of the Potomac navigation have sent to the delegates of this county, to be laid before the Assembly, a petition (which sets forth the reasons) for relief in the depth of the canals, which it may be found necessary to open at the Great and Little Falls of the river. As public economy and private interest equally prompt the measure, and no possible disadvantage, that we can see, will attend granting the petition, we flatter ourselves no opposition will be given. To save trouble, to expedite the business, and to obtain uniformity without delay, or an intercourse between the two Assemblies on so trifling a matter, we have taken the liberty of sending the draft of a bill to members of both Assemblies, which, if approved, will be found exactly similar. With the greatest esteem and regard, I am, Dear Sir, &c.

TO SAMUEL VAUGHAN.

Mount Vernon, 30 November, 1785.

DEAR SIR,

I have been honored with your favor of the 9th, and have received the pamphlet, which you were so obliging as to send me, entitled *Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus*, by the Count de Mirabeau. I thank you, my good Sir, for this instance of your attention, but wish you had taken time to peruse it first, as I have not yet had leisure to give it a reading. I thought, as most others seemed to think, that all the

exceptionable parts of that institution had been done away at the last general meeting; but, with those who are disposed to cavil, or who have the itch of writing strongly upon them, nothing can be made to suit their palates. The best way, therefore, to disconcert and defeat them, is to take no notice of their publications. All else is but food for declamation.

There is not, I conceive, an unbiassed mind, that would refuse the officers of the late army the right of associating for the purpose of establishing a fund for the support of the poor and distressed of their fraternity, when many of them, it is well known, are reduced to their last shifts by the ungenerous conduct of their country in not adopting more vigorous measures to render their certificates productive. That charity is all that remains of the original institution, none, who will be at the trouble of examining it, can deny.

I have lately received a letter from Mr. Vaughan (your son) of Jamaica, accompanied by a puncheon of rum, which he informs me was sent by your order as a present to me. Indeed, my dear Sir, you overwhelm me with your favors, and lay me under too many obligations to leave a hope remaining of discharging them. Hearing of the distress, in which that island, with others in the West Indies, is involved by the late hurricane, I have taken the liberty of requesting Mr. Vaughan's acceptance, for his own use, of a few barrels of superfine flour of my own manufacturing. My best respects, in which Mrs. Washington joins, are offered to Mrs. Vaughan, yourself, and family; and with the highest esteem and regard, I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO COUNT DE ROCHAMBEAU.

Mount Vernon, 1 December, 1785.

MY DEAR COUNT,

Your letter of the 2d of June, which you had the goodness to write to me at the moment of your taking leave of the venerable Dr. Franklin, now lies before me; and I read the renewed assurances of your friendship with sentiments of gratitude and pleasure, short of nothing but the satisfaction I should feel at seeing you, and the recollection of the hours in which, toiling together, we formed our friendship, a friendship which I hope will continue as long as we shall continue to be actors on the present theatre.

A man in the vigor of life could not have borne the fatigues of a passage across the Atlantic with more fortitude, and greater ease, than the Doctor did; and since, instead of setting himself down in the lap of ease, which might have been expected from a person of his advanced age, he has again entered upon the bustling scenes of public life, and in the chair of state is endeavouring to reconcile the jarring interests of the citizens of Pennsylvania. If he should succeed, fresh laurels will crown his brow; but it is to be feared, that the task is too great for human wisdom. I have not yet seen the good old man, but have had intercourse with him by letters.

Rumors of war between the Dutch and the Emperor still prevail, and it seems, if newspaper accounts are to be credited, to be near at hand. If this event should take place, more powers must engage in it, and perhaps a general flame will be kindled ere the first is extinguished. America may think herself happy in having the Atlantic for a barrier; otherwise a spark might set her a blazing. At present we are peaceable,

and our governments are acquiring a better tone. Congress, I am persuaded, will soon be vested with greater powers. The commercial interests throughout the Union are exerting themselves to obtain these, and I have no doubt will effect it. We shall be able then, if a commercial treaty is not entered into with Great Britain, to meet her on the restrictive and contracted ground she has taken, and interdict her shipping and trade in the same manner she has done those of these States. This, and this only, will convince her of the illiberality of her conduct towards us; or that her policy has been too refined and overstrained, even for the accomplishment of her own purposes.

Mrs. Washington is thankful for your constant remembrance of her, and joins me in every good wish for you and Madame de Rochambeau.

I have the honor to be, &c.

TO L. W. OTTO.*

Mount Vernon, 5 December, 1785.

SIR,

The letter, which you did me the honor to write to me on the 1st of October, only came to hand the 28th of last month. My particular acknowledgments are due to you for your recollection and attention, and I pray you to be assured of the pleasure I felt at hearing the place lately filled by M. de Marbois, near the sovereignty of these States, was so happily supplied. On this instance of his Most Christian Majesty's attention to your merits, I offer you my sincere congratulations.

For the favorable sentiments entertained of me in

---

* Successor to M. de Marbois as *Chargé d'Affaires* from the Court of France in the United States.

France, and particularly at the court, all my gratitude is due; but to none in a higher degree than to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, for whom I have the highest esteem and regard. For your obliging offers of service here, or in France, I sincerely thank you; and, at the same time that I give you the trouble of forwarding a few letters, beg you to believe that I am, &c.

TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE ALEXANDRIA ACADEMY.

17 December, 1785.

GENTLEMEN,

That I may be perspicuous and avoid misconception, the proposition which I wish to lay before you is committed to writing, and is as follows.

It has long been my intention to invest, at my death, one thousand pounds current money of this State in the hands of trustees, the interest only of which to be applied in instituting a school in the town of Alexandria, for the purpose of educating orphan children, who have no other resource, or the children of such indigent parents, as are unable to give it; the objects to be considered and determined by the trustees for the time being, when applied to by the parents or friends of the children, who have pretensions to this provision. It is not in my power at this time to advance the above sum; but that a measure, that may be productive of good, may not be delayed, I will until my death, or until it shall be more convenient for my estate to advance the principal, pay the interest thereof, to wit, fifty pounds annually.

Under this state of the matter, I submit to your consideration the practicability and propriety of blending the two institutions together, so as to make one semi-

nary under the direction of the president, visitors, or such other establishment as to you shall seem best calculated to promote the objects in view, and for preserving order, regularity, and good conduct in the academy. My intention, as I have before intimated, is, that the principal sum shall never be broken in upon; the interest only to be applied for the purposes abovementioned. It was also my intention to apply the latter to the sole purpose of education, and of that kind of education, which would be the most extensively useful to people of the lower class of citizens, namely, reading, writing, and arithmetic, so as to fit them for mechanical purposes.

The fund, if confined to this, would comprehend more subjects; but, if you shall be of opinion, that the proposition I now offer can be made to comport with the institution of the school which is already established, and approve of an incorporation of them in the manner before mentioned, and thereafter, upon a full consideration of the matter, should conceive that this fund would be more advantageously applied towards clothing and schooling, than solely to the latter, I will acquiesce in it most cheerfully; and I shall be ready, as soon as the trustees are established upon a permanent footing, by deed or other instrument of writing, to vest the aforesaid sum of one thousand pounds in them and their successors for ever, with powers to direct and manage the same agreeably to these my declared intentions.*

* The above proposal was accepted by the trustees of the Alexandria Academy, who engaged on their part to do all in their power to comply with the benevolent intention of the donor. It was in their opinion best to appropriate the fund to the institution as then established, and wholly for schooling.

TO COUNT DE FLORIDA BLANCA.

Mount Vernon, 19 December, 1785.

SIR,

My homage is due to his Catholic Majesty for the honor of his present. The value of it is intrinsically great; but it is rendered inestimable by the manner, and the hand it is derived from. Let me entreat you, therefore, Sir, to lay before the King my thanks for the jackasses, with which he has been graciously pleased to compliment me; and to assure his Majesty of my unbounded gratitude for this instance of his royal notice and favor. That long life, perfect health, and unfading glory may attend his Majesty's reign, is my fervent wish. With great respect and consideration,

I have the honor to be, &c.*

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 6 February, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 4th of January never reached me till yesterday, or the receipt of it should have had an earlier acknowledgment. Let me, in the first place,

* The King of Spain, hearing that General Washington was endeavouring to procure in Europe jackasses of the best breed, for the purpose of rearing mules on his estates, made him a present of two, and sent over a person with one of them, who was acquainted with the habits of those animals and the mode of treating them, and who arrived at Portsmouth in New Hampshire, and proceeded thence with his charge by land to Mount Vernon. Count de Florida Blanca was the prime minister of Spain. In a complimentary answer to the above letter he said; "It will give pleasure to his Majesty, that opportunities of a higher nature may offer to prove the great esteem he entertains for your Excellency's personal merit, singular virtues, and character." — *St. Ildefonso, September 1st*, 1786.

thank you for your kind attention to my inquiries; and in the next, pray you to know precisely from Mr. Lear upon what terms he would come to me. I am not inclined to leave matters of this kind to after discussion or misconception. Whatever agreement is previously made shall be pointedly fulfilled on my part, which will prevent every cause of complaint on his.

Mr. Lear, or any other who may come into my family in the blended characters of preceptor to the children, and clerk or private secretary to me, will sit at my table, will live as I live, will mix with the company who resort to the house, and will be treated in every respect with civility and proper attention. He will have his washing done in the family, and may have his linen and stockings mended by the maids of it. The duties, which will be required of him, are generally such as appertain to the offices above mentioned. The first will be very trifling, till the children are a little more advanced; and the other will be equally so, as my correspondences decline (which I am endeavouring to effect), and after my accounts and other old matters are brought up. To descend more minutely into his duties I am unable, because occasional matters may call for particular services; but nothing derogatory will be asked or expected. After this explanation of my wants, I request that Mr. Lear will mention the annual sum he will expect for these services, and I will give him a decided answer by the return of the stages, which now carry the mail and travel quickly. A good hand, as well as proper diction, would be a recommendation on account of fair entries, and for the benefit of the children who will have to copy after it.*

* An arrangement was made satisfactory to both parties; and Mr. Lear, a young gentleman from Portsmouth in New Hampshire, who had recently graduated at Harvard University, went to Mount Vernon

The discovery of extracting fresh water from salt, by a simple process and without the aid of fire, will be of amazing importance to the sons of Neptune, if it is not vitiated or rendered nauseous by the operation, and can be made to answer all the valuable purposes of other fresh water at sea. Every maritime power in the world in this case ought, in my opinion, to offer some acknowledgment to the inventor.* With every sentiment of regard and friendship,

I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO WILLIAM DRAYTON.

Mount Vernon, 25 March, 1786.

SIR,

I feel very sensibly the honor conferred on me, by the "South Carolina Society for promoting and improving Agriculture and other Rural Concerns," by unanimously electing me the first honorary member of that body; and I pray you, Sir, as chairman, to offer my best acknowledgments and thanks for this mark of its attention. To you for the flattering terms in which the desires of the Society have been communicated, my thanks are particularly due.†

---

and became General Washington's secretary. He was recommended in strong terms by General Lincoln, President Willard, and other gentlemen of distinction, who were acquainted with his character. An intimacy commenced between General Washington and Mr. Lear, which continued through the life of the former.

* The invention proved less valuable than had been anticipated. It had been described by General Lincoln as holding out a fair prospect of success, but he afterwards wrote; "It is now said little may be expected from the supposed invention for extracting fresh water from salt."

† In communicating to General Washington the above intelligence, Mr. Drayton added; "This mark of their respect, the Society thought, was with peculiar propriety due to the man, who, by his gallantry and

It is much to be wished, that every State in the Union would establish a society similar to this; and that these societies would correspond with each other, and fully and regularly impart the result of the experiments actually made in husbandry, together with such other useful discoveries as have stood, or are likely to stand, the test of investigation. Nothing, in my opinion, would contribute more to the welfare of these States, than the proper management of lands; and nothing, in this State particularly, seems to be less understood. The present mode of cropping practised among us is destructive to landed property, and must, if persisted in much longer, ultimately ruin the holders of it. I have the honor to be, &c.

TO HENRY LEE, IN CONGRESS.*

Mount Vernon, 5 April, 1786.

My dear Sir,

My sentiments with respect to the federal government are well known. Publicly and privately have they been communicated without reserve; but my opinion is, that there is more wickedness than ignorance in the conduct of the States, or, in other words, in the conduct of those who have too much influence in the government of them; and until the curtain is withdrawn, and the private views and selfish principles, upon which these men act, are exposed to public notice,

---

conduct as a soldier, contributed so eminently to stamp a value on the labors of every American farmer; and who, by his skill and industry in the cultivation of his fields, has likewise distinguished himself as a farmer." — *Charleston, November 23d*, 1785.

* Formerly Colonel Henry Lee of the army, and now a delegate in Congress from Virginia.

I have little hope of amendment without another convulsion.

The picture of our affairs as drawn by the committee, approved by Congress, and presented to the public, did not at all surprise me.* Before that report, though I could not go into the minutiæ of matters, I was more certain of the aggregate of our† , than I am now of the remedy, which will be applied. Without the latter, I do not see upon what ground your agent at the court of Morocco, and the other at Algiers, are to treat, unless, having to do with new hands, they mean to touch the old strings, and make them dance awhile to the tune of promises. I thank you for the pamphlet, which contains the correspondence between Mr. Jay and Mr. Littlepage, and shall be obliged to you for a gazette containing the publication of the letter, which appears to have given rise to them. I am, &c.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 10 April, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

The violent rains and consequent freshets have given such interruption to the stages in this part of the world, that your favor of the 15th ultimo did not reach my hands till Saturday last. I accede to the pecuniary allowance of two hundred dollars per annum required

* See *Journals of Congress, February 3d, 7th, and 15th*, 1786. "Our federal distresses," said Mr. Lee, "gather fast to a point. New Jersey has refused the requisition, and will not grant a shilling till New York accedes to the impost. Perhaps this intemperance in Jersey may bring this State to acquiesce in a system of finance long ago approved by ten States, and whose operation might have saved the difficulties, which impend over the Union." — *New York, March 2d.*

† Blank in the original.

by Mr. Lear, in addition to the stipulations mentioned in my last, as a compensation for his services, and shall be glad to receive him into my family as soon as he can make it convenient to repair to it. At any rate, I shall be glad to know, as nearly as may be, when to expect him, that I may arrange matters accordingly. There can be little doubt of Mr. Lear's finding, by method and management, more than the time he speaks of for study; to facilitate, rather than impede which, would give me pleasure, as far as it can be made to comport with the purposes for which he is employed. With the greatest esteem and regard,

I am, &c.

TO ROBERT MORRIS.

Mount Vernon, 12 April, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I give you the trouble of this letter at the instance of Mr. Dalby of Alexandria, who is called to Philadelphia to attend what he conceives to be a vexatious lawsuit respecting a slave of his, whom a society of Quakers in the city, formed for such purposes, have attempted to liberate. The merits of this case will no doubt appear upon trial. From Mr. Dalby's state of the matter, it should seem, that this society is not only acting repugnantly to justice, so far as its conduct concerns strangers, but in my opinion impoliticly with respect to the State, the city in particular, without being able, except by acts of tyranny and oppression, to accomplish its own ends. He says the conduct of this society is not sanctioned by law. Had the case been otherwise, whatever my opinion of the law might have been, my respect for the policy of the State would on

this occasion have appeared in my silence; because against the penalties of promulgated laws one may guard, but there is no avoiding the snares of individuals, or of private societies. If the practice of this society, of which Mr. Dalby speaks, is not discountenanced, none of those, whose *misfortune* it is to have slaves as attendants, will visit the city if they can possibly avoid it; because by so doing they hazard their property, or they must be at the expense (and this will not always succeed) of providing servants of another description.

I hope it will not be conceived from these observations, that it is my wish to hold the unhappy people, who are the subject of this letter, in slavery. I can only say, that there is not a man living, who wishes more sincerely than I do to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it; but there is only one proper and effectual mode by which it can be accomplished, and that is by legislative authority; and this, as far as my suffrage will go, shall never be wanting.* But when slaves, who are happy and contented with their present masters, are tampered with and seduced to leave them; when masters are taken unawares by these practices; when a conduct of this kind begets discontent on one side and resentment on the other; and when it happens to fall on a man, whose purse will not measure with that of the society, and he loses his property for want of means to defend it; it is oppression in such a case, and not humanity in any, because it introduces more evils than it can cure.

* In writing to Mr. John F. Mercer on this subject, General Washington said; "I never mean, unless some particular circumstances should compel me to it, to possess another slave by purchase, it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted, by which slavery in this country may be abolished by law." — *September 9th*, 1786.

I will make no apology for writing to you on this subject, for, if Mr. Dalby has not misconceived the matter, an evil exists which requires a remedy; if he has, my intentions have been good, though I may have been too precipitate in this address. Mrs. Washington joins me in every good and kind wish for Mrs. Morris and your family, and I am, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 10 May, 1786.

My dear Marquis,

The account given of your tour through Prussia and other States of Germany to Vienna and back, and of the troops that you saw reviewed, in the pay of those monarchs, at different places, is not less pleasing than it is interesting, and must have been as instructive as entertaining to yourself. Your reception at the courts of Berlin, Vienna, and elsewhere, must have been gratifying to you. To be received by the King of Prussia, and Prince Henry his brother, (who, as soldiers and politicians, yield the palm to none,) with such marks of attention and distinction, was as indicative of their discernment, as it is of your merit, and will increase my opinion of them. It is to be lamented, however, that great characters are seldom without a blot. That one man should tyrannize over millions will always be a shade in that of the former, whilst it is pleasing to hear that a due regard to the rights of mankind is characteristic of the latter. I shall revere and love him for this trait of his character.

To view the several fields of battle, over which you passed, could not, among other sensations, have failed to excite this thought; "Here have fallen thou-

sands of gallant spirits to satisfy the ambition of their sovereigns, or to support them perhaps in acts of oppression and injustice! Melancholy reflection! For what wise purpose does Providence permit this? Is it as a scourge to mankind, or is it to prevent them from becoming too populous? If the latter, would not the fertile plains of the western world receive the redundancy of the old?" *

For the several articles of intelligence with which you have been so good as to furnish me, and for your sentiments on European politics, I feel myself very much obliged. On these I can depend. Newspaper accounts are too sterile, vague, and contradictory, on which to form any opinion or to claim even the smallest attention.

The observations you have made on the policy and practice of Great Britain at other courts of Europe, respecting these States, I was but too well informed and convinced of before. Unhappily for us, though their accounts are greatly exaggerated, yet our conduct has laid the foundation for them. It is one of the evils of democratical governments, that the people, not always seeing and frequently misled, must often feel before they can act right; but then evils of this nature seldom fail to work their own cure. It is to be lamented, nevertheless, that the remedies are so slow, and that those, who may wish to apply them seasonably, are not attended to before they suffer in person, in interest, and in reputation. I am not without hopes, that matters will take a more favorable turn in the federal constitution. The discerning part of the community have long since seen the necessity of giving adequate pow-

* A description of this tour by Lafayette is contained in a letter from him to Mr. Jay. See *Diplomatic Correspondence*, Vol. X. p. 53.

ers to Congress for national purposes, and the ignorant and designing must yield to it ere long. Several late acts of the different legislatures have a tendency thereto. Among these the impost, which is now acceded to by every State in the Union, though clogged a little by that of New York, will enable Congress to support the national credit in pecuniary matters better than it has been; whilst a measure, in which this State has taken the lead at its last session, will, it is to be hoped, give efficient powers to that body for all commercial purposes. This is a nomination of some of its first characters to meet other commissioners from the several States, in order to consider and decide upon such powers, as shall be necessary for the sovereign authority of them to act under; which are to be reported to the respective legislatures at their autumnal sessions, for, it is to be hoped, final adoption; thereby avoiding those tedious and futile deliberations, which result from recommendations and partial concurrences, at the same time that it places it at once in the power of Congress to meet European nations upon decisive and equal grounds. All the legislatures, which I have heard from, have come into the proposition, and have made very judicious appointments.* Much good is expected from this measure, and it is regretted by many, that more objects were not embraced by the meeting. A general convention is talked of by many for the purpose of revising and correcting the defects

* This convention met at Annapolis in September, 1786. Five States only were represented, and when the members came together, they found themselves invested with such limited powers, as not to enable them to act for the general purposes of the meeting. They did little else than to draw up a report, to be presented to the several States, urging the necessity of a revision of the confederated system of government, and recommending a convention of delegates with larger powers to be held at Philadelphia on the 2d of May following.

of the federal government; but, whilst this is the wish of some, it is the dread of others, from an opinion that matters are not yet sufficiently ripe for such an event.

The British still occupy our posts to the westward, and will, I am persuaded, continue to do so under one pretence or another, no matter how shallow, as long as they can. Of this, from some circumstances which had occurred, I have been convinced since August, 1783, and gave it as my opinion at that time, if not officially to Congress as the sovereign, at least to a number of its members, that they might act accordingly. It is indeed evident to me, that they had it in contemplation to do this at the time of the treaty. The expression of the article, which respects the evacuation of them, as well as the tenor of their conduct since relative to this business, is strongly marked with deception. I have not the smallest doubt, but that every secret engine is continually at work to inflame the Indian mind, with a view to keep it at variance with these States, for the purpose of retarding our settlements to the westward, and depriving us of the fur and peltry trade of that country.

The benevolence of your heart, my dear Marquis, is so conspicuous upon all occasions, that I never wonder at any fresh proofs of it; but your late purchase of an estate in the colony of Cayenne, with a view of emancipating the slaves on it, is a generous and noble proof of your humanity.* Would to God a like spirit might diffuse itself generally into the minds of the people of this country. But I despair of seeing it. Some peti-

* In a remarkable and very interesting letter, written by Lafayette in the prison of Magdeburg, he said; "I know not what disposition has been made of my plantation at Cayenne, but I hope Madame de Lafayette will take care, that the negroes, who cultivate it, shall preserve their liberty."—SPARKS's *Life of Gouverneur Morris*, Vol. I. p. 410.

tions were presented to the Assembly, at its last session, for the abolition of slavery, but they could scarcely obtain a reading. To set the slaves afloat at once would, I really believe, be productive of much inconvenience and mischief; but by degrees it certainly might, and assuredly ought to be effected; and that too by legislative authority.

I give you the trouble of a letter to the Marquis de St. Simon, in which I have requested to be presented to M. de Menonville. The favorable terms in which you speak of Mr. Jefferson give me great pleasure. He is a man of whom I early imbibed the highest opinion. I am as much pleased, therefore, to meet confirmations of my discernment in these matters, as I am mortified when I find myself mistaken.

I send herewith the copies of your private letters to me, promised in my last, and which have been since copied by your old aid. As Mrs. Washington and myself have both done ourselves the honor of writing to Madame de Lafayette, I shall not give you the trouble at this time of presenting my respects to her, but pray you to accept every good wish, which this family can render for your health, and every blessing this life can afford you. I cannot conclude without expressing to you the earnest inquiries and ardent wishes of your friends (among whom I claim to stand the first) to see you in America, and giving you repeated assurances of the sincerity of my friendship, and of the affectionate regard with which I am, &c.

P. S. I had like to have forgotten a promise, which I made in consequence of the enclosed application from Colonel Carter. It was, that I would write to you for the wolf-hound, if to be had conveniently. The inducements, and the services you would render by

this act, will be more evident from the expressions of the letter, than from any thing I can say.

The vocabulary for her Imperial Majesty I will use my best endeavours to have completed, but she must have a little patience. The Indian tribes on the Ohio are numerous, dispersed, and distant from those, who are most likely to do the business properly.

TO THE MARCHIONESS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 10 May, 1786.

MADAM,

The tokens of regard, with which Miss de Lafayette and my namesake* honored the young folks of this family, will cement the friendship, which seems to be rising in their tender breasts, and will increase those flames of it, which they have imbibed from their parents, to which nothing can add strength but the endearments that flow from personal interviews, and the unreserved exchange of liberal sentiments. Will you not then, Madam, afford them this opportunity? May we hope for it soon? If the assurances of the sincerest esteem and affection, if the varieties of uncultivated nature, the novelty of exchanging the gay and delightful scenes of Paris, with which you are surrounded, for the rural amusements of a country in its infancy, if the warbling notes of the feathered songsters on our lawns and meads, can for a moment make you forget the melody of the opera and the pleasures of the court, these all invite you to give us this honor, and the opportunity of expressing to you personally those sentiments of attachment and love, with which you have inspired us.

---

* George Washington Lafayette.

The noontide of life is now passed with Mrs. Washington and myself; and all we have to do is to spend the evening of our days in tranquillity, and glide gently down a stream, which no human effort can ascend. We must, therefore, however reluctantly it is done, forego the pleasure of such a visit as you kindly invite us to make. But the case with you is far otherwise. Your days are in their meridian brightness. In the natural order of things, you have many years to come, in which you may indulge yourself in all the amusements, which variety can afford and different countries produce, and in receiving those testimonies of respect, which every one in the United States would wish to render to you.

My mother will receive the compliments you honor her with, as flattering marks of attention; and I shall have great pleasure in delivering them myself. My best wishes and vows are offered for you, and for the fruits of your love; and with every sentiment of respect and attachment, I have the honor to be, Madam, &c.

TO JOHN JAY.

Mount Vernon, 18 May, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

In due course of post, I have been honored with your favors of the 2d and 16th of March;* since which I have been a good deal engaged and pretty much from home. For the enclosure, which accompanied the first, I thank you. Mr. Littlepage seems to have forgotten what had been his situation, forgotten what was due to you, and indeed what was necessary

* See *Life of John Jay*, Vol. I. p. 242.

to his own character; and his guardian, I think, seems to have forgotten every thing.*

I coincide perfectly in sentiment with you, my dear Sir, that there are errors in our national government, which call for correction; loudly, I would add; but I shall find myself happily mistaken if the remedies are at hand. We are certainly in a delicate situation; but my fear is, that the people are not yet sufficiently *misled* to retract from error. To be plainer, I think there is more wickedness than ignorance mixed in our councils. Under this impression I scarcely know what opinion to entertain of a general convention. That it is necessary to revise and amend the articles of confederation, I entertain no doubt; but what may be the consequences of such an attempt is doubtful. Yet something must be done, or the fabric must fall, for it is certainly tottering.

Ignorance and design are difficult to combat. Out of these proceed illiberal sentiments, improper jealousies, and a train of evils which oftentimes in republican governments must be sorely felt before they can be removed. The former, that is ignorance, being a fit soil for the latter to work in, tools are employed which a generous mind would disdain to use; and which nothing but time, and their own puerile or wicked productions, can show the inefficacy and dangerous tendency of. I think often of our situation, and view it with concern. From the high ground we stood upon, from the plain path which invited our footsteps, to be so fallen, so lost, is really mortifying. But virtue, I fear, has in a great degree taken its departure from our land, and the want of a disposition to do justice is the

* This subject appears to have been made a matter of much more public importance than its merits deserved. It is fully explained in the *Life of John Jay*, Vol. I. pp. 204–229.

source of the national embarrassments; for, whatever guise or coloring is given to them, this I apprehend is the origin of the evils we now feel, and probably shall labor under for some time yet. With respectful compliments to Mrs. Jay, and sentiments of sincere friendship, I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO JAMES TILGHMAN.

Mount Vernon, 5 June, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I have just had the pleasure to receive your letter of the 26th ultimo. Of all the numerous acquaintances of your lately deceased son, and amidst all the sorrowings, which are mingled on the occasion, I may venture to assert, that, excepting his nearest relatives, none could have felt his death with more regret than I did, because no one entertained a higher opinion of his worth, or had imbibed sentiments of greater friendship for him, than I had done.

That you, Sir, should have felt the keenest anguish for the loss I can readily conceive. The ties of parental affection, united with those of friendship, could not fail to produce this effect. It is however a dispensation, the wisdom of which is inscrutable; and, amidst all your grief, there is this consolation to be drawn, that while living, no man could be more esteemed, and since dead, none more lamented, than Colonel Tilghman.*

---

* Colonel Tench Tilghman had been an aid to General Washington during a large part of the war, and had acquired in an unusual degree his confidence and esteem. He died after a short illness at Baltimore. Among the Mount Vernon Papers I find the following inscription in manuscript.

"Beneath this Stone are laid the Remains of a Good Man, Colonel

As his correspondence with the committee of New York is not connected with any transactions of mine, so consequently it is not necessary that the papers, to which you allude, should compose part of my public documents; but, if they stand single, as they exhibit a trait of his public character, and, like all the rest of his transactions, will, I am persuaded, do honor to his understanding and probity, it may be desirable in this point of view to keep them alive by mixing them with mine, which undoubtedly will claim the attention of the historian; who, if I mistake not, will upon an inspection of them discover the illiberal ground on which the charge, mentioned in the extract from the letter you did me the honor to enclose, is founded. That a calumny of this kind had been reported, I knew. I had laid my account for the calumnies of anonymous scribblers; but I never before had conceived, that such a one as is related could have originated with, or met the countenance of Captain Asgill, whose situation often filled me with the keenest anguish. I felt for him on many accounts; and not the least, when, viewing him as a man of honor and sentiment, I considered how unfortunate it was for him, that a wretch, who possessed neither, should be the means of causing in him a single pang, or a disagreeable sensation. My favorable opin-

---

Tench Tilghman, who died April the 18th, 1786, in the 43d Year of his Age. He took an early and active part in the great contest, that secured the Independence of the United States of America. He was aid-de-camp to his Excellency General Washington, Commander-in-chief of the American Armies, and was honored with his friendship and confidence; and he was one of those, whose merits were distinguished and honorably rewarded by the Congress."

Several of General Washington's correspondents spoke of his death with much warmth of feeling. Robert Morris said; "You have lost in him a most faithful and valuable friend. He was to me the same. I esteemed him very, very much, and I lament his loss exceedingly."—*April 26th.*

ion of him, however, is forfeited, if, being acquainted with these reports, he did not immediately contradict them. That I could not have given countenance to the insults, which *he says* were offered to his person, especially the grovelling one of erecting a gibbet before his prison window, will, I expect, readily be believed, when I explicitly declare, that I never heard of a single attempt to offer an insult, and that I had every reason to be convinced, that he was treated by the officers around him with all the tenderness and every civility in their power.

I would fain ask Captain Asgill, how he could reconcile such a belief, if his mind had been seriously impressed with it, to the continual indulgences and procrastinations he had experienced? He will not, I presume, deny, that he was admitted to his parole within ten or twelve miles of the British lines; if not to a formal parole, to a confidence yet more unlimited, by being permitted, for the benefit of his health and the recreation of his mind, to ride, not only about the cantonment, but into the surrounding country for many miles, with his friend and companion, Major Gordon, constantly attending him. Would not these indulgences have pointed a military character to the fountain from which they flowed. Did he conceive, that discipline was so lax in the American army, as that *any* officer in it would have granted these liberties to a person confined by the express order of the Commander-in-chief, unless authorized to do so by the same authority? To ascribe them to the interference of Count de Rochambeau is as void of foundation as his other conjectures; for I do not recollect that a sentence ever passed between that general and me, directly or indirectly, on the subject.

I was not without suspicions, after the final liberation

and return of Captain Asgill to New York, that his mind had been improperly impressed, or that he was defective in politeness.

The treatment he had met with, in my conception, merited an acknowledgment. None, however, was offered, and I never sought for the cause.

This concise account of the treatment of Captain Asgill is given from a hasty recollection of the circumstances. If I had time, and it was essential, by unpacking my papers and recurring to authentic files, I might have been more pointed and full. It is in my power at any time to convince the unbiassed mind, that my conduct through the whole of this transaction was neither influenced by passion, guided by inhumanity, nor under the control of any interference whatsoever. I essayed every thing to save the innocent and bring the guilty to punishment. With what success, the impartial world must and hereafter certainly will decide. With very great esteem and regard,

I am, &c.*

* In Mr. Tilghman's letter, to which the above was an answer, was enclosed an extract from another, written by a respectable gentleman in London, and containing an account of conversations of Captain Asgill, and his complaints of being cruelly treated while a prisoner, awaiting the result of the inquiry respecting the murder of Captain Huddy. General Washington felt the injustice and illiberality of such conduct the more forcibly, as he was conscious of having exercised the greatest tenderness towards Captain Asgill, and of having allowed him indulgences, which, under the circumstances of the case, he could have no reason to demand or even expect. This is now abundantly proved by the letters on the subject, which are contained in the present work. It was properly estimated by Asgill himself at the time. "I cannot conclude," said he, in a letter to General Washington, "without expressing my gratitude to your Excellency for ordering Colonel Dayton to favor me as much as my situation would admit of; and in justice to him, I must acknowledge the feeling and attentive manner in which those commands were executed." — *Chatham, May 17th*, 1782. The principal papers relative to this matter were selected by Colonel Humphreys, and published soon after the complaints or charges of Asgill were promulgated. See *Columbian Magazine for January*, 1787.

TO HENRY LEE, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 18 June, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

The advantages, with which the inland navigation of the Rivers Potomac and James are pregnant, must strike every mind that reasons upon the subject; but there is, I perceive, a diversity of sentiment respecting the benefits and the consequences, which may flow from the free and immediate use of the Mississippi. My opinion of this matter has been uniformly the same; and no light in which I have been able to consider the subject is likely to change it. It is, neither to relinquish nor to push our claim to this navigation, but in the mean while to open *all* the communications, which nature has afforded, between the Atlantic States and the western territory, and to encourage the use of them to the utmost. In my judgment it is a matter of very serious concern to the well-being of the former to make it the interest of the latter to trade with them; without which, the ties of consanguinity, which are weakening every day, will soon be no bond, and we shall be no more a few years hence to the inhabitants of that country, than the British and Spaniards are at this day; not so much, indeed, because commercial connexions, it is well known, lead to others, and united are difficult to be broken. These must take place with the Spaniards, if the navigation of the Mississippi is opened.

Clear I am, that it would be for the interest of the western settlers, as low down the Ohio as the Big Kenhawa, and back to the Lakes, to bring their produce through one of the channels I have named; but the way must be cleared, and made easy and obvious to them, or else the ease with which people glide down streams will give a different bias to their thinking and

acting. Whenever the new States become so populous and so extended to the westward, as really to need it, there will be no power which can deprive them of the use of the Mississippi. Why then should we prematurely urge a matter, which is displeasing and may produce disagreeable consequences, if it is our interest to let it sleep? It may require some management to quiet the restless and impetuous spirits of Kentucky, of whose conduct I am more apprehensive in this business, than I am of all the opposition that will be given by the Spaniards.* With great esteem and regard,

I am, dear Sir, &c.

---

* Opinions in Congress, it would seem, were various on this subject. If we may judge, however, from Mr. Lee's reply to the above, the general voice in that body was not for insisting on the navigation of the Mississippi as a necessary requisite in a treaty with Spain. "Your reasoning," said he, "is perfectly conformable to the prevalent doctrine on that subject in Congress. We are very solicitous to form a treaty with Spain for commercial purposes. Indeed no nation in Europe can give us conditions so advantageous to our trade as that kingdom. The carrying business they are like ourselves in, and this common source of difficulty in adjusting commercial treaties between other nations, does not apply to America and Spain. But, my dear General, I do not think you go far enough. Rather than defer longer a free and liberal system of trade with Spain, why not agree to the exclusion of the Mississippi? This exclusion will not, cannot, exist longer than the infancy of the western emigrants. Therefore, to those people, what is now done cannot be important. To the Atlantic States it is highly important; for we have no prospect of bringing to a conclusion our negotiations with the court of Madrid, but by yielding the navigation of the Mississippi. Their minister here is under positive instructions on that point. In all other arrangements the Spanish monarch will give to the States testimonies of his regard and friendship. And I verily believe, that, if the above difficulty should be removed, we should soon experience the advantages, which would flow from a connexion with Spain." — *July 3d.*

TO NICHOLAS PIKE.

Mount Vernon, 20 June, 1786.

SIR,

Your letter of the 25th of March did not come to hand till lately, or it should have had an earlier acknowledgment. It gives me the highest satisfaction to find the arts and sciences making a progress in any country, but when I see them advancing in the rising States of America, I feel a peculiar pleasure. In my opinion every effort of genius, and all attempts towards improving useful knowledge, ought to meet with encouragement in this country. Your performance is of the most useful kind, and from the opinion of those gentlemen, who have inspected it, I have not the least doubt but that it is a very valuable one.*

I feel a very grateful sense of the honor, which you designed me by wishing to dedicate your book to me, and would even sacrifice my own ideas of propriety respecting the matter, so far as to comply with your request, if I thought, that, by a non-compliance, I should discourage so good a work. But, Sir, as there are several characters in your part of the country, who deservedly hold a high rank in the literary world, and whose names would add dignity to such a performance, it would be more proper, if I might presume to offer my opinion on the subject, to dedicate your book to them. I must therefore beg leave to decline the honor, which you would do me, as I have before done in two or three cases of a similar kind. With the sincerest wishes for the success of your work, and with much esteem, I am, Sir, &c.

* Its title was *A Complete System of Arithmetic*, a work much approved in its day, and which held a conspicuous place for many years in the counting-houses and principal schools.

TO GEORGE WILLIAM FAIRFAX.

Mount Vernon, 25 June, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your conjectures respecting the fate of our letters are, I am persuaded, too well founded. Such frequent miscarriages would not result from negligence alone. But why, after the prying eye of curiosity, or the malignant hope of trepanning an individual or making useful discoveries, were disappointed, the letters should not have been permitted to proceed to their address, is not easily to be conceived. Being well apprized of the delicacy of your situation, I have studiously avoided every expression in all my letters, which might if known involve you in the smallest difficulty or embarrassment.* It is wantonly unfeeling, therefore, to destroy as well as to have inspected those, which were founded in friendship only, and have the occurrences which relate to the parties for their basis. In future I will always place my letters to you under cover to Mr. Athawes.

I have already informed you, that Mr. Pine's reception in this country has been favorable, and indicative of a profitable harvest in the line of his profession. In consequence of your good report of this gentleman, I furnished him with letters to many of the first characters in Philadelphia and Annapolis, and have every reason to believe, that his success will be at least equal to his expectations, if it is not injured by any act of his own; against which his prudence will no doubt guard him.

Though envy is no part of my composition, yet the picture you have drawn of your present habitation

* Mr. Fairfax went to England before the war, and had never returned, nor taken any part in political affairs, though he was friendly to the American cause.

and mode of living* is enough to create a strong desire in me to be a participator of the tranquillity and rural amusements you have described. I am getting into the latter as fast as I can, being determined to make the remainder of my life easy, let the world or the affairs of it go as they may. I am not a little obliged to you for the assurance of contributing to this, by procuring me a buck and doe of the best English deer; but if you have not already been at this trouble, I would, my good Sir, now wish to relieve you from it, as Mr. Ogle of Maryland has been so obliging, as to present to me six fawns from his park of English deer at Bellair. Of the forest deer of this country I have also procured six, two bucks and four does. With these, and tolerable care, I shall soon have a full stock for my small paddock. I do not mean to comprehend in this relinquishment the offer of my good friend Mrs. Fairfax. I will receive with great pleasure and gratitude the seeds of any trees or shrubs, which are not natives of this country, but reconcilable to the climate of it, that she may be so obliging as to send me; and while my attentions are bestowed on the nurture of them, it would, if any thing were necessary to do it, remind me of the happy moments I have spent in conversations on this and other subjects with that lady at Belvoir.†

The postscript to your letter of the 23d of January has given me pain. It would seem from the tenor of it, as if you conceived I was not well pleased at your giving Mr. T—— C—— a letter of introduction to me. Be assured, my dear Sir, no idea was ever more foreign to my feelings. And now, whilst I am upon this sub-

* At Bath in England.

† An estate near Mount Vernon, which was the former residence of Mr. Fairfax.

ject let me once for all entreat you not to be scrupulous or backward in your introductions in future; for I can assure you with much truth, that every occasion, which affords the means of hearing from you and Mrs. Fairfax, will give pleasure in this family; and no person, who shall come with your passport, will be an unwelcome guest. So many come here without *proper* introductions, that it is a real satisfaction when I am able to discriminate. This will be the case whenever Mr. Ansley,* or any other shall present a letter to me from you. My manner of living is plain. I do not mean to be put out of it. A glass of wine and a bit of mutton are always ready; and such as will be content to partake of them are always welcome. Those, who expect more, will be disappointed, but no change will be effected by it. With compliments and best wishes for Mrs. Fairfax,

I am, my dear Sir, &c.

TO WILLIAM GRAYSON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 26 July, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

Is it not among the most unaccountable things in nature, that the representation of a great country should generally be so thin as not to be able to execute the functions of government?† To what is this to be

* A gentleman, whom Mr. Fairfax had mentioned as about to proceed to the United States, by direction of the commissioners for distributing the money given by the government to the refugees, with the view of ascertaining the state of the property they had held in America, and the just measure of their claims.

† The journals of Congress are very expressive on this topic, as they show frequent adjournments because there were not members enough present to proceed to business. Mr. Grayson had written; "Till within a short time the representation has been so thin, as to render it impracticable for Congress to undertake any matter of importance,

ascribed? Is it the result of political manœuvre in some States, or is it owing to supineness or want of means? Be the causes what they may, it is shameful and disgusting. In a word, it hurts us. Our character as a nation is dwindling; and what it must come to, if a change should not soon take place, our enemies have foretold; for in truth we seem either not capable, or not willing, to take care of ourselves.

For want, I suppose, of a competent knowledge of the Connecticut claim to western territory, the compromise which is made with her appears to me to be a disadvantageous one for the Union, and, if her right is not one of the motives (according to your account) for yielding to it, in my humble opinion, is exceedingly dangerous and bad. Upon such principles *might*, not *right*, must ever prevail, and there will be no surety for any thing.*

I wish very sincerely, that the land ordinance may

---

although there are many, which require their serious attention." — *May 27th.*

* Alluding to the tract of country usually called the CONNECTICUT RESERVE, making a part of the State of Ohio, and situate on the south side of Lake Erie. Speaking of the measure, as acceded to by Congress, Mr. Grayson said; "The consequence I apprehend is a clear loss of about six millions of acres to the United States, which had already been ceded by Virginia and New York; for the Assembly of Connecticut now sitting will unquestionably open a land-office, and the federal constitution has not given a court in this instance. The advocates for this measure urged in favor of its adoption, that the claim of a powerful State, although unsupported by right, was, under present circumstances, a disagreeable thing; that sacrifices must be made for the public tranquillity, as well as to acquire an indisputable title to the residue; that Connecticut would settle it immediately with emigrants well-disposed to the Union, who would form a barrier, not only against the British, but the Indian tribes; and that the thick settlement they would immediately form would enhance the value of the adjacent country and facilitate emigrations thereto." — Upon these grounds the cession on the part of Connecticut was accepted by Congress, the *reservation* above mentioned being conceded at the same time. All the delegates, except those from Virginia and Maryland, voted in favor of the proposition. — *Journals, May 26th.*

answer the expectations of Congress. I had, and still have, my doubts of the utility of the plan, but pray devoutly, that they may never be realized, as I am desirous of seeing it a productive branch of the revenue. That part, which makes the waters and carrying-places common highways, and free for all the States, is certainly valuable.

I thank you for the other articles of information. Such as you have disclosed confidentially, you may rest assured will proceed no further, till it becomes public through other channels; and this shall always be the case with paragraphs, which are so marked. The answer to the memorial of Mr. Adams by Lord Carmarthen I have seen at large. It was impolitic and unfortunate if not unjust in these States to pass laws, which by fair construction might be considered as infractions of the treaty of peace. It is good policy at all times to place one's adversary in the wrong. Had we observed good faith, and the western posts had then been withheld from us by Great Britain, we might have appealed to God and man for justice; and, if there are any guarantees to the treaty, we might have called upon them to see it fulfilled. But now we cannot do this; though clear I am, that the reasons assigned by the British ministry are only ostensible, and that the posts, under one pretence or another, were intended to be detained, though no such acts had ever passed. But how different would our situation have been under such circumstances. With very sincere regard and affection, I am, dear Sir, &c.*

* By the seventh article of the treaty of peace, the posts held by the British within the United States were to be evacuated. By the fourth article, every facility was to be allowed to British subjects to collect the debts due to them in the several States. Lord Carmarthen had shown, by quoting the recent laws of some of the States, that obstacles had been thrown in the way of collecting such debts, and that the fourth article

TO HENRY LEE, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 26 July, 1786.

My dear Sir,

If I stopped short of your ideas respecting the navigation of the Mississippi, or of what may be the opinions of Congress on this subject, it was not from want of coincidence of sentiments, but because I was ignorant, at that time, of the rubs, which are in the way of your commercial treaty with Spain, and because I thought some address might be necessary to temporize with Kentucky and keep that settlement in a state of quietness. At this moment it is formidable, and the population is rapidly increasing. There are many ambitious and turbulent spirits among its inhabitants, who, from the present difficulties in their intercourse with the Atlantic States, have turned their eyes to New Orleans, and may become riotous and ungovernable, if the hope of traffic with it is cut off by treaty. Notwithstanding, if this cession is counterpoised, it may be a more favorable time for Congress to speak decisively to them than when they have become stronger, but not sufficiently matured to force the passage of the Mississippi themselves; whilst the plans, which are in agitation for opening communications with that territory, may, if successful, unfold to them new prospects mutually beneficial to the old and new States. All these matters, no doubt, will be duly considered by Congress, and a decision had on whichever side the advantages preponderate.

It was with very sincere regret that I received the news of General Greene's death.* Life and the con-

of the treaty was thus violated, which was the reason why the posts were not given up.

* General Greene died after a short illness near Savannah, in Georgia, on the 19th of June, 1786, aged forty-four, leaving a name that will ever shine with preëminent lustre in the annals of his country. "Your friend

cerns of this world, one would think, are so uncertain, and so full of disappointments, that nothing is to be counted upon from human actions. Adieu; with sentiments of great esteem and affection, I am, &c.

TO COUNT DE ROCHAMBEAU.

Mount Vernon, 31 July, 1786.

MY DEAR COUNT,

I have been duly honored with the two letters, which you were pleased to address to me in the months of January and March last. I need scarcely tell you, that your communications always afford me the sincerest gratification; because they are always replete with the most friendly sentiments, because they insensibly bring to remembrance some circumstances of that pleasing and important period we so happily passed together, and because you frequently have it in your power to give such information, as in my present retirement from the busy and political world cannot fail of being acceptable to me.

It must give pleasure to the friends of humanity, even in this distant section of the globe, to find that the clouds, which threatened to burst in a storm of war on Europe, have dissipated and left a still brighter horizon. It is also to be hoped, that something will turn up to prevent, even at the death of the Elector of Bavaria or the King of Prussia, the effusion of hu-

---

and second," said Mr. Lee in his letter to Washington, "the patriot and noble Greene is no more. Universal grief reigns here. How hard is the fate of the United States to lose such a son in the middle of life! Irreparable loss! But he is gone, and I am incapable to say more."— *July 11th.* Congress voted, that a monument should be erected at the seat of government, "in honor of his patriotism, valor, and ability."— *Journals, August 8th.*

man blood for the acquisition of a little territory. As the rage of conquest, which in the times of barbarity stimulated nations to blood, has in a great measure ceased, as the objects which formerly gave birth to wars are daily diminishing, and as mankind are becoming more enlightened and humanized, I cannot but flatter myself with the pleasing prospect, that a more liberal policy and more pacific systems will take place amongst them. To indulge this idea affords a soothing consolation to a philanthropic mind; insomuch that, although it should be found an illusion, one would hardly wish to be divested of an error so grateful in itself, and so innocent in its consequences.

The treaty of amity, which has lately taken place between the King of Prussia and the United States, marks a new era in negotiation. It is the most liberal treaty, which has ever been entered into between independent powers. It is perfectly original in many of its articles; and, should its principles be considered hereafter as the basis of connexion between nations, it will operate more fully to produce a general pacification, than any measure hitherto attempted amongst mankind. Superadded to this we may safely assert, that there is at present less war in the world than there ever has been at any former period.

The British continue to hold the posts ceded by the late treaty of peace to the United States. Each of these powers does not hesitate to criminate the other by alleging some infraction of that treaty. How the matter will terminate, time must disclose. Every thing remains tranquil on this side of the Atlantic, except that the savages sometimes commit a few trifling ravages on the frontiers. General Greene lately died at Savannah in Georgia. The public, as well as his family and friends, has met with a severe loss. He was a great and good man indeed. I am, &c.

TO THE CHEVALIER DE LA LUZERNE.

Mount Vernon, 1 August, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

The letter you did me the honor to write to me on the 3d of February has come safely to hand. Nothing could be more satisfactory to me than the friendly sentiments contained in it, and the generous manner in which you always interest yourself in the happiness and dignity of the United States. I wish I had it in my power to inform you, that the several States have fully complied with all the requisitions, which Congress has made to them on national subjects. But, unfortunately for us, this is not yet the case, although for my own part I do not cease to expect, that this just policy will ultimately take effect. It is not the part of a good citizen to despair of the republic; nor ought we to have calculated, that our young governments would acquire in so short a period all the consistency and solidity, which it has been the work of ages to give to other nations. All the States, however, have at length granted the impost; though unhappily some of them have granted it under such qualifications as have hitherto prevented its operation. The greater part of the Union seems to be convinced of the necessity of federal measures, and of investing Congress with the power of regulating the commerce of the whole. The reasons you offer on this subject are certainly forcible, and I cannot but hope will ere long have their due efficacy.*

* These reasons may be gathered from the following extract. "I thank your Excellency for the details, which you have so kindly given me respecting American affairs. The sentiments at Versailles are similar to your own, in regard to the powers that the States ought to grant to Congress for the purpose of a general regulation of commerce. So wise and prudent a measure cannot surely result in any detriment to liberty;

In other respects our internal governments are daily acquiring strength. The laws have their fullest energy; justice is well administered; robbery, violence, or murder is not heard of, from New Hampshire to Georgia. The people at large, as far as I can learn, are more industrious than they were before the war. Economy begins to prevail, partly from necessity and partly from choice and habit. The seeds of population are scattered over an immense tract of western country. In the old States, which were the theatres of hostility, it is wonderful to see how soon the ravages of war are repaired. Houses are rebuilt, fields enclosed, stocks of cattle, which were destroyed, are replaced, and many a desolated territory assumes again the cheerful appearance of cultivation. In many places the vestiges of conflagration and ruin are hardly to be traced. The arts of peace, such as clearing rivers, building bridges, and establishing conveniences for travelling, are assiduously promoted. In short, the foundation of a great empire is laid, and I please myself with a persuasion, that Providence will not leave its work imperfect.

I am sensible, that the picture of our situation, which has been exhibited in Europe since the peace, has been of a very different complexion; but it must be remembered, that all the unfavorable features have been much heightened by the medium of the English newspapers, through which they have been represented. The British still continue to hold the posts on our frontiers,

---

and the Americans have too much intelligence and good sense not to perceive, that foreign powers, who desire commercial alliances with them, cannot treat with thirteen distinct States, which, having different interests among themselves, can only act in a united capacity through Congress in adopting such general measures, as will redound to the advantage of the republic. I hope the next news, which we shall receive from America, will inform us, that the several legislatures have put the last hand to this important affair." — *Paris, February 3d.*

and affect to charge us with some infractions of the treaty. On the other hand we retort the accusation. What will be the consequence, is more than I can pretend to predict. To me, however, it appears, that they are playing the same foolish game in commerce that they have lately done in war; that their ill-judged impositions will eventually drive our ships from their ports, wean our attachments from their manufactures, and give to France decided advantages for a commercial connexion with us. To strengthen the alliance, and promote the interests of France and America, will ever be the favorite object of him, who has the honor to subscribe himself, with every sentiment of attachment, dear Sir, &c.

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Mount Vernon, 1 August, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

The letters you did me the favor to write to me, on the 4th and 7th of January, have been duly received.* In answer to your obliging inquiries respecting the dress and attitude, which I would wish to have given to the statue in question, I have only to observe, that, not having sufficient knowledge in the art of sculpture to oppose my judgment to the taste of connoisseurs, I do not desire to dictate in the matter. On the contrary, I shall be perfectly satisfied with whatever may be judged decent and proper. I should even scarcely have ventured to suggest, that perhaps a servile adherence to the garb of antiquity might not be alto-

* Making inquiries of General Washington as to the costume and attitude in which he wished the statue to appear, which Houdon was making for the State of Virginia. —See JEFFERSON'S *Writings*, Vol. I. p. 393.

gether so expedient, as some little deviation in favor of the modern costume, if I had not learnt from Colonel Humphreys, that this was a circumstance hinted in conversation by Mr. West to Mr. Houdon. This taste, which has been introduced in painting by West, I understand is received with applause, and prevails extensively.

We have no news of importance; and, if we had, I should hardly be in the way of learning it, as I divide my time between the superintendence of opening the navigation of our rivers, and attention to my private concerns. Indeed I am too much secluded from the world to know with certainty what sensations the refusal of the British to deliver up the western posts has made on the public mind. I fear the edge of its sensibility is somewhat blunted. Federal measures are not yet universally adopted. New York, which was as well disposed a State as any in the Union, is said to have become in a degree anti-federal. Some other States are in my opinion falling into very foolish and wicked plans of emitting paper money. I cannot however give up my hopes and expectations, that we shall ere long adopt a more just and liberal system of policy. What circumstances will lead, or what misfortunes will compel us to it, is more than can be told without the spirit of prophecy. In the mean time the people are industrious. Economy begins to prevail, and our internal governments are in general tolerably well administered.

You will probably have heard of the death of General Greene before this reaches you; in which case you will, in common with your countrymen, have regretted the loss of so great and so honest a man. General McDougall, who was a brave soldier and a disinterested patriot, is also dead. He belonged to the

legislature of his State. The last act of his life was (after being carried on purpose to the Senate) to give his voice against the emission of a paper currency. Colonel Tilghman, who was formerly of my family, died lately, and left as fair a reputation as ever belonged to a human character. Thus some of the pillars of the revolution fall. Others are mouldering by insensible degrees. May our country never want props to support the glorious fabric. With sentiments of esteem and regard, I have the honor to be, &c.

TO JOHN JAY.

Mount Vernon, 1 August, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I have to thank you very sincerely for your interesting letter of the 27th of June, as well as for the other communications you had the goodness to make at the same time. I am sorry to be assured, of what indeed I had little doubt before, that we have been guilty of violating the treaty in some instances. What a misfortune it is, that the British should have so well grounded a pretext for its palpable infractions! And what a disgraceful part, out of the choice of difficulties before us, are we to act!

Your sentiments, that our affairs are drawing rapidly to a crisis, accord with my own. What the event will be, is also beyond the reach of my foresight. We have errors to correct. We have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation. Experience has taught us, that men will not adopt and carry into execution measures the best calculated for their own good, without the intervention of a coercive power. I do not conceive we can exist long as a na-

tion without having lodged somewhere a power, which will pervade the whole Union in as energetic a manner as the authority of the State governments extends over the several States.

To be fearful of investing Congress, constituted as that body is, with ample authorities for national purposes, appears to me the very climax of popular absurdity and madness. Could Congress exert them for the detriment of the public, without injuring themselves in an equal or greater proportion? Are not their interests inseparably connected with those of their constituents? By the rotation of appointment, must they not mingle frequently with the mass of citizens? Is it not rather to be apprehended, if they were possessed of the powers before described, that the individual members would be induced to use them, on many occasions, very timidly and inefficaciously for fear of losing their popularity and future election? We must take human nature as we find it. Perfection falls not to the share of mortals. Many are of opinion, that Congress have too frequently made use of the suppliant, humble tone of requisition in applications to the States, when they had a right to assert their imperial dignity and command obedience. Be that as it may, requisitions are a perfect nullity where thirteen sovereign, independent, disunited States are in the habit of discussing and refusing compliance with them at their option. Requisitions are actually little better than a jest and a by-word throughout the land. If you tell the legislatures they have violated the treaty of peace, and invaded the prerogatives of the confederacy, they will laugh in your face. What then is to be done? Things cannot go on in the same train for ever. It is much to be feared, as you observe, that the better kind of people, being disgusted with the circumstances, will

have their minds prepared for any revolution whatever. We are apt to run from one extreme to another. To anticipate and prevent disastrous contingencies would be the part of wisdom and patriotism.

What astonishing changes a few years are capable of producing. I am told that even respectable characters speak of a monarchical form of government without horror. From thinking proceeds speaking; thence to acting is often but a single step. But how irrevocable and tremendous! What a triumph for our enemies to verify their predictions! What a triumph for the advocates of despotism to find, that we are incapable of governing ourselves, and that systems founded on the basis of equal liberty are merely ideal and fallacious! Would to God, that wise measures may be taken in time to avert the consequences we have but too much reason to apprehend.

Retired as I am from the world, I frankly acknowledge I cannot feel myself an unconcerned spectator. Yet, having happily assisted in bringing the ship into port, and having been fairly discharged, it is not my business to embark again on a sea of troubles. Nor could it be expected, that my sentiments and opinions would have much weight on the minds of my countrymen. They have been neglected, though given as a last legacy in the most solemn manner. I had then perhaps some claims to public attention. I consider myself as having none at present.

With sentiments of sincere esteem and friendship, I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LA ROUERIE.

Mount Vernon, 10 August, 1786.

DEAR MARQUIS,

I am to acknowledge the receipt of the agreeable letter, which you did me the honor to write to me on the 20th of January, and at the same time to congratulate you on the happy event announced in it. Permit me to assure you, that nothing affords me more satisfaction, than to receive good news of my friends; and you must allow me the liberty of considering your marriage to an amiable lady, with a handsome fortune, in that point of light. Indeed I was not surprised at this, because I knew the merits of the Marquis de la Rouerie entitled him to such a connexion. But, I must confess, I was a little pleased, if not surprised, to find him think quite like an American on the subject of matrimony and domestic felicity. For, in my estimation, more permanent and genuine happiness is to be found in the sequestered walks of connubial life, than in the giddy rounds of promiscuous pleasure, or the more tumultuous and imposing scenes of successful ambition.

This sentiment will account in a degree for my not making a visit to Europe. Other reasons may conspire to prevent me from enjoying the heart-felt satisfaction I should experience in embracing my friends on that continent. Their kind solicitude and invitations are, however, entitled to my cordial acknowledgments; and you may be persuaded, it will not be among the least of my regrets on this occasion, that these circumstances preclude me from receiving the welcome, and witnessing the happiness, I should expect to meet with at the Château de la Rouerie.

I enter so little into disquisitions of politics, that I

could hardly do justice to the subject should I undertake to dilate upon it. I have understood, in general, that Congress have taken arrangements for the payment of the interest due on securities given to foreigners, who served in their army. A timely and efficacious application to the States will, I hope, in future produce more punctuality, and supersede the necessity of any interference on my part, which it appears to me would be improper on many accounts. Mrs. Washington desires her compliments may be made acceptable to Madame la Marquise de la Rouerie and yourself. With a similar request, I have the honor to remain yours, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 15 August, 1786.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

I will not conceal, that my numerous correspondencies are daily becoming irksome to me. Yet I always receive your letters with augmenting satisfaction, and therefore rejoice with you in the measures, which are likely to be productive of a more frequent intercourse between our two nations. Thus motives of a private as well as of a public nature conspire to give me pleasure, in finding that the active policy of France is preparing to take advantage of the supine stupidity of England with respect to our commerce.

While the latter by its impolitic duties and restrictions is driving our ships incessantly from its harbours, the former seems, by the invitations it is giving, to stretch forth the friendly hand to invite them into its ports. I am happy in a conviction, that there may be established between France and the United States such

a mutual intercourse of good offices and reciprocal interests, as cannot fail to be attended with the happiest consequences. Nations are not influenced, as individuals may be, by disinterested friendships; but, when it is their interest to live in amity, we have little reason to apprehend any rupture. This principle of union can hardly exist in a more distinguished manner between two nations, than it does between France and the United States. There are many articles of manufacture, which we stand absolutely in need of, and shall continue to have occasion for, so long as we remain an agricultural people, which will be while lands are so cheap and plenty, that is to say, for ages to come.

In the mean time we shall have large quantities of timber, fish, oil, wheat, tobacco, rice, indigo, &c. to dispose of. Money we have not. Now it is obvious, that we must have recourse for the goods and manufactures we may want to the nation, which will enable us to pay for them by receiving our produce in return. Our commerce with any of the great manufacturing kingdoms of Europe will, therefore, be in proportion to the facility of making remittances, which such manufacturing nations may think proper to afford us. On the other hand, France has occasion for many of our productions and raw materials. Let her judge whether it is most expedient to receive them by direct importation, and to pay for them in goods, or to obtain them through the circuitous channel of Britain, and to pay for them in money as she formerly did.

I know that Britain arrogantly expects we shall sell our produce wherever we can find a market, and bring the money to purchase goods from her. I know that she vainly hopes to retain what share she pleases in our trade, in consequence of our prejudices in favor of her fashions and manufactures. But these are illusions,

which will vanish and disappoint her, as the dreams of conquest have already done. Experience is constantly teaching us, that these predilections were founded in error. We find the quality and price of the French goods we receive, in many instances, to be better than the quality and price of the English. Time, and a more thorough acquaintance with the business, may be necessary to instruct your merchants in the choice and assortment of goods necessary for such a country. As to the ability for giving credit, in which the English merchants boast a superiority, I am confident it would be happy for America if the practice could be entirely abolished.

However unimportant America may be considered at present, and however Britain may affect to despise her trade, there will assuredly come a day, when this country will have some weight in the scale of empires. While connected with us as colonies only, was not Britain the first power in the world? Since the dissolution of that connexion, does not France occupy the same illustrious place? Your successful endeavours, my dear Marquis, to promote the interests of your two countries, as you justly call them, must give you the most unadulterated satisfaction. Be assured the measures, which have lately been taken, with regard to the two articles of *oil* and *tobacco*, have tended very much to endear you to your fellow citizens on this side of the Atlantic.

Although I pretend to no peculiar information respecting commercial affairs, nor any foresight into the scenes of futurity, yet, as the member of an infant empire, as a philanthropist by character, and, if I may be allowed the expression, as a citizen of the great republic of humanity at large, I cannot help turning my attention sometimes to this subject. I would be under-

stood to mean, I cannot avoid reflecting with pleasure on the probable influence, that commerce may hereafter have on human manners and society in general. On these occasions I consider how mankind may be connected like one great family in fraternal ties. I indulge a fond, perhaps an enthusiastic idea, that, as the world is evidently much less barbarous than it has been, its melioration must still be progressive; that nations are becoming more humanized in their policy, that the subjects of ambition and causes for hostility are daily diminishing; and, in fine, that the period is not very remote, when the benefits of a liberal and free commerce will pretty generally succeed to the devastations and horrors of war.

Some of the late treaties, which have been entered into, and particularly that between the King of Prussia and the United States, seem to constitute a new era in negotiation, and to promise the happy consequences I have just now been mentioning. But let me ask you, my dear Marquis, in such an enlightened, in such a liberal age, how is it possible that the great maritime powers of Europe should submit to pay an annual tribute to the little piratical states of Barbary? Would to Heaven we had a navy able to reform those enemies to mankind, or crush them into non-existence.

I forbear to enter into a discussion of our domestic politics, because there is little interesting to be said upon them, and perhaps it is best to be silent; since I could not disguise or palliate, where I might think them erroneous. The British still hold the frontier posts, and are determined to do so. The Indians commit some trifling ravages, but there is nothing like a general or even open war.

It is a great satisfaction to have it in my power to pay some attentions to Monsieur Duplessis, by whom

I had the happiness of receiving your last letter. He is now at Mount Vernon on his way to Georgia. You will see by the length to which I have extended this letter, that I can never find myself weary of conversing with you. Adieu, my dear Marquis. Mrs. Washington and the family desire to be most respectfully presented to Madame de Lafayette; to whom I pray you also to offer my very best homage, and believe that I am, &c.

TO THOMAS HUTCHINS.

Mount Vernon, 20 August, 1786.

SIR,

You will see by the enclosed letter from the Marquis de Lafayette to me, that the Empress of Russia is desirous of obtaining some authentic documents respecting the language of the natives of this country, for the purpose of compiling a Universal Dictionary. As I have thought no person was more in condition to accomplish that essential service for the republic of letters than yourself, I have taken the liberty of transmitting a specimen of the vocabulary to you, together with a request that you will do me the favor of paying as early and accurate attention to the completion of the matter as your avocations will admit. Persuaded that a gentleman of your taste for science in general, and particularly of your capacity of acquiring the information in question, will enter upon the task with pleasure, I make no apology for troubling you with it. Nor do I think it necessary to add any thing farther on the subject, than that it may be expedient to extend the vocabulary as far as, with the aid of your friends, you conveniently can; and that the greatest

possible precision and exactitude will be indispensable in committing the Indian words to paper by a just orthography. With sentiments of esteem and regard, I have the honor to be, &c.

TO DAVID HUMPHREYS.*

Mount Vernon, 1 September, 1786.

My dear Humphreys,

Enclosed are all the documents Mr. Lear could find respecting the confinement and treatment of Captain Asgill. For want of recurrence to them before I wrote to Mr. Tilghman,† I perceive, that a bad memory had run me into an error in my narrative of the latter, in one particular. For it would seem by that, as if the loose and unguarded manner, in which Captain Asgill was held, was sanctioned by me; whereas one of my letters to Colonel Dayton condemns this conduct, and orders Asgill to be closely confined. Mr. Lear has given all the letters at length. Extracts might have answered; but I judged it better, that the whole tenor of the correspondence should appear, that no part might seem to be hidden.

I well remember Major Gordon's attending Asgill; and by one of my letters to Dayton it is evident, that Gordon had written to me, but my letter books have registered no reply. In what manner it would be best to bring the matter before the public I am at a loss, and leave it to you to determine under a consideration

---

* The commission for making treaties in Europe, of which Colonel Humphreys was secretary, having been dissolved, he returned to the United States in May, and since that time he had passed several days at Mount Vernon. He was now in Connecticut.

† This letter may be seen under the date of June 5th.

of the circumstances, which are as fully communicated as the documents in my hands will enable me to do. There is one mystery in the business, which I cannot develope, nor are there any papers in my possession which explain it. Hazen was ordered to send an unconditional prisoner. Asgill comes. Hazen, or some other, must have given information of a Lieutenant Turner, under the former description. Turner is ordered on, but never came. Why? I am unable to say; nor is there any letter from Hazen to be found, which accounts for a non-compliance with the order. If I had not too many causes to distrust my memory, I should ascribe it to there having been no such officer, or that he was also under capitulation; for Captain Shaach seems to have been held as a proper victim after this.

I will write as soon as I am able to Mr. Tilghman, requesting him to withhold my first accounts of Asgill's treatment from his correspondent in England, promising an authentic one from original papers. It may, however, have passed him. In that case, it will be necessary for me, to say something to reconcile my own accounts.

I write to you with a very aching head and disordered frame, and Mr. Lear will copy the letter. Saturday last, by an imprudent act, I brought on an ague and fever on Sunday, which returned with violence Tuesday and Thursday; and, if Dr. Craik's efforts are ineffectual, I shall have them again this day. The family join me in every good wish for you. It is unnecessary to assure you of the friendship and affection with which I am, &c.

P. S. We have found Gordon's letters. They contain a demand of Asgill, as an officer protected by the

capitulation of Yorktown. This I suppose was the reason they were not answered.

TO BUSHROD WASHINGTON.

Mount Vernon, 30 September, 1786.

DEAR BUSHROD,

I was from home when your servant arrived, and found him in a hurry to be gone when I returned. I have company in the house, and am on the eve of a journey up the river to meet the directors of the Potomac Company. These things combining will not allow me time to give any explicit answer to the question you have propounded.

Generally speaking, I have seen as much evil as good result from such societies as you describe the constitution of yours to be. They are a kind of *imperium in imperio*, and as often clog as facilitate public measures. I am no friend to institutions, except in local matters, which are wholly or in a great measure confined to the county of the delegates. To me it appears much wiser and more politic to choose able and honest representatives, and leave them, in all national questions to determine from the evidence of reason, and the facts which shall be adduced, when internal and external information is given to them in a collective state. What certainty is there that societies in a corner or remote part of a State can possess that knowledge, which is necessary for them to decide on many important questions that may come before an Assembly? What reason is there to expect, that the society itself may be accordant in opinion on such subjects? May not a few members of this society, more sagacious and designing than the rest, direct the meas-

ures of it to private views of their own? May not this embarrass an honest, able delegate, who hears the voice of his country from all quarters, and thwart public measures?

These are first thoughts, but I give no decided opinion. Societies, nearly similar to such as you speak of, have lately been formed in Massachusetts, but what has been the consequence? Why, they have declared the senate useless, many other parts of the constitution unnecessary, salaries of public officers burthensome, &c. To point out the defects of the constitution, if any existed, in a decent way was proper enough; but they have done more. They first vote the courts of justice in the present circumstances of the State oppressive; and next by violence stop them; which has occasioned a very solemn proclamation and appeal from the governor to the people. You may say no such matters are in contemplation by your society. Granted. A snow-ball gathers by rolling. Possibly a line may be drawn between occasional meetings for special purposes, and a standing society to direct with local views and partial information the affairs of the nation, which cannot be well understood but by a large and comparative view of circumstances. Where is this so likely to enter as in the General Assembly of the people? What figure then must a delegate make, who comes there with his hands tied, and his judgment forestalled? His very instructors, perhaps, if they had nothing sinister in view, were they present at all the information and arguments, which would come forward, might be the first to change their sentiments.*

* To understand the full purport of the views here advanced, it is necessary to know the plan of the Society, as described by Mr. Bushrod Washington in his letter to his uncle.

"We have lately instituted a society in these lower counties," said he,

Hurried as this letter is, I am sensible that I am writing to you upon a very important subject. I have no time to copy, correct, or even peruse it; for which reason I could wish to have it or a copy returned to me. I am, &c.

TO JEREMIAH WADSWORTH.

Mount Vernon, 22 October, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I have received your letter of the 1st instant, and thank you for the communications it contains. It has

---

"called the *Patriotic Society*. As it is something new, and there are a few men both good and sensible who disapprove of it, it will be a high gratification to me to know your sentiments of it, if you will be so kind as to communicate them. The object of the institution is to inquire into the state of public affairs; to consider in what the true happiness of the people consists, and what are the evils which have pursued, and still continue to molest us; the means of attaining the former, and escaping the latter; to inquire into the conduct of those, who represent us, and to give them our sentiments upon those laws, which ought to be or are already made.

"It will also be a considerable object to instil principles of frugality into the minds of the people, both by precept and example. If any real good should result from such a society, we hope similar ones will be generally instituted through the State; and, if so, they may establish a very formidable check upon evil-disposed men, who, clothed with power, make interested motives, and not public good, the rule of their conduct. These are the general outlines of the institution; and, whether in the event it may be beneficial or not, I think that it has taken its rise in virtuous motives. We have had a considerable meeting of the most sensible and respectable gentlemen in this part of the country, and another is to be held on Tuesday next, previous to the meeting of the Assembly. Our design is to hold another as soon as the Assembly has risen; the first to instruct our delegates what they ought to do, the next to inquire what they have done." — *Bushfield, September 27th.*

Such was Mr. Bushrod Washington's first outline of the Patriotic Society. In answering the above letter from his uncle, he added the following explanations.

"The motives, which gave birth to the Society, were these. We con-

given me much satisfaction to find, that the letter I had written to my much lamented friend General Greene, respecting his affairs with Captain Gun, had got safe to his hands. Had the case been otherwise, and he had harboured a suspicion of my inattention or neglect, the knowledge of it would have given me real pain.

Persuaded as I always have been of General Greene's integrity and worth, I spurned those reports, which

---

ceived, that in a government where the voice and sentiments of the people are delivered by representation, the few who are elected to speak these sentiments are the servants of the electors; that in grand points of national concern, the people are the best judges of their wants, their own interests, and can more sensibly feel those evils, which they wish to be corrected; that upon these two principles they have a right to instruct their delegates; and that silence at a time when they had reason to apprehend a conduct in these servants contrary to their wishes would be highly criminal. We thought that an appearance of corruption was discoverable in the mass of the people, or, what is as bad, a total insensibility to their public interest. Persuaded of this, and equally convinced that this inattention proceeded more from the want of information than of real virtue, a number of the principal gentlemen in these four counties determined to assemble, for the purpose of inquiring and deliberating upon such subjects as were of the most interesting consequence, and to communicate their sentiments to the people in the form of instructions; which, if approved by them, are signed and sent to their delegates; if otherwise, they continue only the opinion of a few, and can have no weight.

"The people's attention being thus awakened to their public concerns, they are led to investigate the causes of those evils which oppress them, and to endeavour by some method to relieve them. The most uninquiring mind must, when put in action, perceive that the defect is either in the manners of the people, or in the misconduct of those, who, being intrusted to form salutary laws, have adopted the most destructive measures. The evil when seen may easily be removed; and unless the majority of the people are vitiated, which can hardly be the case, they would certainly be led to apply the only two possible remedies; the one, to exert more zeal in making a judicious choice of delegates; the other, to reform their manners. I am fully convinced that nothing could be more effective of the prosperity of this country, than the method you have pointed out of electing honest and able representatives. To recommend this to the attention of the people is a principal object with this Society.

"Thus you will perceive, that this institution assumes no other power,

tended to calumniate his conduct in the connexion with Banks;* being perfectly convinced, that, whenever the matter should be investigated, his motives for entering into it would appear pure and unimpeachable. I was not without my fears though, that he might suffer in a pecuniary way by his engagements with that man. I would fain hope, however, that the case ultimately may be otherwise; and that, upon a final settlement of his affairs, there will be a handsome competency for Mrs. Greene and the children. But should it turn out differently, and Mrs. Greene, yourself, and Mr. Rutledge should think proper to intrust my namesake G. W. Greene to my care, I will give him as good an education as this country (I mean North America) will afford; and will bring him up to either of the genteel professions that his friends may choose, or his own inclination shall lead him to pursue, at my own cost and charge.†

---

than that of recommending to the people an attention to their own interests, and of furnishing them with the sentiments and opinions of a few, which they may either reject or adopt. It is true, that a few designing men might creep into these societies; but I should hope that a majority will be virtuous. If this should be the case, their recommendation may have happy consequences; if the majority should unhappily be vicious, they are but the opinions of a few expressed collectively. In this, however, I am resolved, that, as soon as I perceive that other motives than those of the public good influence their conduct, I will quit them."—*October 31st.*

* This connexion was on public account, and had for its object the supplies of the army under General Greene's command at the south. His personal responsibilities became in some manner involved, so as to cause him a great deal of perplexity.

† The eldest son of General Greene was named George Washington. He was sent to France for the purpose of being educated under the patronage of the Marquis de Lafayette, between whom and his father a strong friendship had existed. "I have this day," said General Knox in a letter to General Washington, "been putting on board the French packet the eldest son of our highly esteemed friend the late General Greene. He goes to the Marquis de Lafayette in order to receive for some years his education in France. It is proposed, that he should re-

I condole very sincerely with Mrs. Greene (to whom please to offer my respects), and the rest of General Greene's friends, on the loss the public, as well as his family, has sustained by the death of this valuable character; especially at this crisis, when the political machine seems to portend the most awful events. My compliments, if you please, to Mrs. Wadsworth, and to any of my old acquaintances, who may happen to be within your circle. With much esteem and regard,

I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO HENRY LEE, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 31 October, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am indebted to you for your several favors of the 1st, 11th, and 17th instant, and shall reply to them in the order of their dates. But first let me thank you for the interesting communications imparted by them.

The picture which you have exhibited, and the accounts which are published of the commotions and temper of numerous bodies in the eastern States, present a state of things equally to be lamented and deprecated. They exhibit a melancholy proof of what our transatlantic foe has predicted; and of another thing, perhaps, which is still more to be regretted, and is yet more unaccountable, that mankind, when left to

---

turn in about six years. Indeed this will be long enough, lest he should receive habits inconsistent with those necessary to be practised in his own country. He is a lively boy, and with a good education he will probably be an honor to the name of his father, and the pride of his friends." — *New York, May 25th*, 1788. He remained in France till the anxieties of his mother, on account of the political troubles in that country, induced her to recall him, and in the year 1794 he arrived in Georgia. Soon afterwards he was unfortunately drowned in the Savannah River.

themselves, are unfit for their own government. I am mortified beyond expression when I view the clouds, that have spread over the brightest morn that ever dawned upon any country. In a word, I am lost in amazement when I behold what intrigue, the interested views of desperate characters, ignorance, and jealousy of the minor part, are capable of effecting, as a scourge on the major part of our fellow citizens of the Union; for it is hardly to be supposed, that the great body of the people, though they will not act, can be so short-sighted or enveloped in darkness, as not to see rays of a distant sun through all this mist of intoxication and folly.

You talk, my good Sir, of employing influence to appease the present tumults in Massachusetts. I know not where that influence is to be found, or, if attainable, that it would be a proper remedy for the disorders. *Influence* is not *government.* Let us have a government by which our lives, liberties, and properties will be secured, or let us know the worst at once. Under these impressions, my humble opinion is, that there is a call for decision. Know precisely what the insurgents aim at. If they have *real* grievances, redress them if possible; or acknowledge the justice of them, and your inability to do it at the moment. If they have not, employ the force of government against them at once. If this is inadequate, *all* will be convinced, that the superstructure is bad, or wants support. To be more exposed in the eyes of the world, and more contemptible than we already are, is hardly possible. To delay one or the other of these expedients, is to exasperate on the one hand, or to give confidence on the other, and will add to their numbers; for, like snow-balls, such bodies increase by every movement, unless there is something in the way to obstruct and crumble them before their weight is too great and irresistible.

These are my sentiments. Precedents are dangerous things. Let the reins of government then be braced and held with a steady hand, and every violation of the constitution be reprehended. If defective, let it be amended, but not suffered to be trampled upon whilst it has an existence.

With respect to the navigation of the Mississippi, you already know my sentiments. They have been uniformly the same, and, as I have observed to you in a former letter, are controverted by only one consideration of weight, and that is, the operation which the occlusion of it may have on the minds of the western settlers, who will not consider the subject in a relative point of view, or on a comprehensive scale, and may be influenced by the demagogues of the country to acts of extravagance and desperation, under the popular declamation, that their interests are sacrificed. Colonel Mason at present is in a fit of the gout. What his sentiments on the subject are, I know not, nor whether he will be able to attend the Assembly during the present session. For some reasons, however, which need not be mentioned, I am inclined to believe he will advocate the navigation of that river. But in all matters of great national moment, the only true line of conduct is dispassionately to compare the advantages and disadvantages of the measure proposed, and decide from the balance. The less evil, where there is a choice of them, should always yield to the greater. What benefits, more than we now enjoy, are to be obtained by such a treaty with Spain, as you have delineated, I am not enough of a commercial man to give my opinion on.* I am, dear Sir, &c.

* *From Mr. Lee's Letter.* — "The eastern States consider a commercial connexion with Spain as the only remedy for the distresses, which oppress their citizens, most of which they say flow from the decay of their

TO JAMES MADISON.

Mount Vernon, 5 November, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

I thank you for the communications in your letter of the 1st instant. The decision of the House on the question respecting a paper emission is portentous, I hope, of an auspicious session. It certainly may be classed with the important questions of the present day, and merited the serious attention of the Assembly. Fain would I hope, that the great and most important of all subjects, the *federal government*, may be considered with that calm and deliberate attention, which the magnitude of it so critically and loudly calls for. Let prejudices, unreasonable jealousies, and local interests, yield to reason and liberality. Let us look to our national character, and to things beyond the present moment. No morn ever dawned more favorably than ours did; and no day was ever more clouded than the present. Wisdom and good examples are necessary at this time to rescue the political machine from the impending storm. Virginia has now an opportunity to set the latter, and has enough of the former, I hope, to take the lead in promoting this great

commerce. Their delegates have consequently zealously pressed the formation of this connexion, as the only effectual mode to revive the trade of their country. In this opinion they have been joined by two of the middle States. On the other hand, Virginia has with equal zeal opposed the connexion, because the project involves expressly the disuse of the navigation of the Mississippi for a given time, and eventually they think will sacrifice our right to it. The delegation is under instructions from the State on this subject. They have acted in obedience to their instructions, and, myself excepted, in conformity to their private sentiments. I confess that I am by no means convinced of the justice or policy of our instructions, and very much apprehend, unless they are repealed by the present Assembly, the fatal effects of discord in council will be experienced by the United States in a very high degree."—*New York, October 11th.*

and arduous work. Without an alteration in our political creed, the superstructure we have been seven years in raising, at the expense of so much treasure and blood, must fall. We are fast verging to anarchy and confusion.

By a letter, which I have received from General Knox, who had just returned from Massachusetts, whither he had been sent by Congress in consequence of the commotions in that State, is replete with melancholy accounts of the temper and designs of a considerable part of the people. Among other things he says, "Their creed is, that the property of the United States has been protected from the confiscation of Britain by the joint exertions of *all*, and therefore ought to be the *common property of all;* and he that attempts opposition to this creed, is an enemy to equity and justice, and ought to be swept from off the face of the earth." Again, "They are determined to annihilate all debts, public and private, and have agrarian laws, which are easily effected by the means of unfunded paper money, which shall be a tender in all cases whatever." He adds, "The number of these people amounts in Massachusetts to about one fifth part of several populous counties, and to them may be collected people of similar sentiments from the States of Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, so as to constitute a body of about twelve or fifteen thousand desperate and unprincipled men. They are chiefly of the young and active part of the community."

How melancholy is the reflection, that in so short a time we should have made such large strides towards fulfilling the predictions of our transatlantic foes! "Leave them to themselves, and their government will soon dissolve." Will not the wise and good strive hard to avert this evil? Or will their supineness suffer igno-

rance, and the arts of self-interested, designing, disaffected, and desperate characters, to involve this great country in wretchedness and contempt? What stronger evidence can be given of the want of energy in our government, than these disorders? If there is not power in it to check them, what security has a man for life, liberty, or property? To you I am sure I need not add aught on this subject. The consequences of a lax or inefficient government are too obvious to be dwelt upon. Thirteen sovereignties pulling against each other, and all tugging at the federal head, will soon bring ruin on the whole; whereas a liberal and energetic constitution, well checked, and well watched to prevent encroachments, might restore us to that degree of respectability and consequence, to which we had the fairest prospect of attaining. With sentiments of very great esteem and regard, I am, dear Sir, &c.*

* *From Mr. Madison's reply.* — "The intelligence from General Knox is gloomy indeed, but is less so than the colors in which I had it through another channel. If the lessons which it inculcates should not work the proper impressions on the American public, it will be a proof that our case is desperate. Judging from the present temper and apparent views of our Assembly, I have some ground for leaning to the side of hope. The vote against paper money has been followed by two others of great importance. By one of them, sundry petitions for applying a scale of depreciation to the military certificates was *unanimously* rejected. By the other the expediency of complying with the recommendation from Annapolis, in favor of a general revision of the federal system, was *unanimously* agreed to. A bill for the purpose is now depending, and in a form which attests the most federal spirit. As no opposition has been yet made, and it is ready for the third reading, I expect it will soon be before the public.

"It has been thought advisable to give this subject a very solemn dress, and all the weight which could be derived from a single State. This idea will also be pursued in the selection of characters to represent Virginia in the federal convention. You will infer our earnestness on this point from the liberty, which will be used, of placing your name at the head of them. How far this liberty may correspond with the ideas, by which you ought to be governed, will be best decided when it must ultimately be determined. In every event, it will assist powerfully in mark-

TO BUSHROD WASHINGTON.

Mount Vernon, 15 November, 1786.

DEAR BUSHROD,

Your letter of the 31st of October in reply to mine of the 30th of September came safe to hand. It was not the intention of my former letter either to condemn, or give my voice in favor of the Patriotic Society, of which you have now, but not before, declared yourself a member; nor do I mean to do it now. I offered observations under the information I had then received, the weight of which was to be considered. As first thoughts, they were undigested, and might be very erroneous.

That representatives ought to be the mouth of their constituents, I do not deny; nor do I mean to call in question the right of the latter to instruct them. It is to the embarrassment, into which they may be thrown in *national matters* by these instructions, that my objections lie. In speaking of national matters I look to the federal government, which, in my opinion, it is the interest of every State to support; and to do this, as there is a variety of interests in the Union, there must be a yielding of the parts to make the whole coalesce. Now a county, a district, or even a State, might decide on a measure, which, though apparently for the benefit of it in its unconnected condition, may be repugnant to the interests of the nation, and eventually to the State itself, as a part of the confederation. If, then, members go instructed to the Assembly from certain districts, the requisitions of Congress repugnant to the sense of them, and all the lights which they may receive from the communications of that body to the

ing the zeal of our legislature, and its opinion of the magnitude of the occasion." — *Richmond, November 8th.*

legislature, must be unavailing, although the nature and necessity of them, when the reasons are fully expounded (which can only be given by Congress to the Assembly through the Executive, and which come before them in their legislative capacity), are as clear as the sun. In local matters which concern the district, or things which respect the internal policy of the State, there may be nothing amiss in instructions. In national matters, also, the *sense*, but not the *law* of the district may be given, leaving the delegates to judge from the nature of the case and the evidence before them.

The instructions of your Society, so far as they have gone, meet my entire approbation, except in the article of "*commutables.*" Here, if I understand the meaning and design of the clause, I must disagree to it most heartily; for, if the intention of it is to leave it optional with the person taxed, to pay any staple commodity (tobacco would be least exceptionable) in lieu of specie, the people will be burthened, a few speculators enriched, and the public derive no benefit from it. Have we not had a recent and melancholy proof of this during the war in the provision tax? Did not the people pay this in some way or other, perhaps badly? And was not the army almost starved? Can any instance be given, where the public has sold tobacco, hemp, flour, or any other commodity upon as good terms as individuals have done it? Must there not be places of deposit for these *commutables;* collectors, storekeepers, and the like, employed? These, rely on it, will sink one half, and a parcel of speculators will possess themselves of the other half. It was to these things, that we owe the present depravity of the minds of so many people of this country, and its being filled with so many knaves and designing characters.

Among the great objects, which you took into consideration at your meeting at Richmond, how comes it to pass, that you never turned your eyes to the inefficacy of the federal government, so as to instruct your delegates to accede to the propositions of the commissioners at Annapolis, or to devise some other mode to give it that energy, which is necessary to support a national character? Every man, who considers the present constitution of it, and sees to what it is verging, trembles. The fabric, which took nine years, at the expense of much blood and treasure, to rear, now totters to the foundation, and without support must soon fall.

The determination of your Society to promote frugality and industry by example, to encourage manufactures, and to avoid dissipation, is highly praiseworthy. These, and premiums for the most useful discoveries in agriculture within your district, the most profitable course of cropping, and the best method of fencing to save timber, would soon make us a rich and happy people. With every good wish for you and yours, in which your aunt joins, I am, &c.

TO JAMES MADISON.

Mount Vernon, 18 November, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

Not having sent to the post-office with my usual regularity, your favor of the 8th did not reach me in time for an earlier acknowledgment than of this date. It gives me the most sensible pleasure to hear, that the acts of the present session are marked with wisdom, justice, and liberality. They are the palladium of good policy, and the only paths that lead to national happi-

ness. Would to God every State would let these be the leading features of their constituent characters. Those threatening clouds, which seem ready to burst on the confederacy, would soon be dispelled. The unanimity with which the bill was received for appointing commissioners agreeably to the recommendation of the convention at Annapolis, and the uninterrupted progress it has met with since, are indications of a favorable issue. It is a measure of equal necessity and magnitude, and may be the spring of reanimation.

Although I have publicly bid adieu to the public walks of life, and had resolved never more to tread that theatre, yet if, upon an occasion so interesting to the well-being of the confederacy, it should have been the wish of the Assembly that I should be an associate in the business of revising the federal system, I should, from a sense of the obligation I am under for repeated proofs of confidence in me, more than from any opinion I should have entertained of my usefulness, have obeyed its call; but it is now out of my power to do this with any degree of consistency. The cause I will mention.

I presume you heard, Sir, that I was first appointed, and have since been rechosen, President of the Society of the Cincinnati; and you may have understood also, that the triennial general meeting of this body is to be held in Philadelphia the first Monday in May next. Some particular reasons, combining with the peculiar situation of my private concerns, the necessity of paying attention to them, a wish for retirement and relaxation from public cares, and rheumatic pains which I begin to feel very sensibly, induced me on the 31st ultimo to address a circular letter to each State society, informing them of my intention not to be at the next meeting, and of my desire not to be rechosen Presi-

dent. The Vice-President is also informed of this, that the business of the Society may not be impeded by my absence. Under these circumstances it will readily be perceived, that I could not appear at the same time and place on any other occasion, without giving offence to a very respectable and deserving part of the community, the late officers of the American army. With sentiments of the highest esteem and affection,

I am, &c.

TO RICHARD BUTLER.

Mount Vernon, 27 November, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I have been requested by the Marquis de Lafayette, in behalf of the Empress of Russia, to obtain a vocabulary of the languages of the Ohio Indians. Previous to my hearing of your appointment as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in that district, I had transmitted to Captain Hutchins a copy of the Marquis's letter, containing the above request; conceiving it would be much in his power, from the opportunities which would present themselves whilst he was surveying the western lands, to do this, and praying him to lend his aid to effect the work for this respectable character.

Since I have heard of your appointment to the above trust, and know to what intercourse with the Indians it must lead, I have resolved to ask the favor of your assistance also. If Captain Hutchins is on the Ohio, he will show you the paper, which was transmitted to me by the Marquis, and which I forwarded to him. If he is not, it may be sufficient to inform you, that it was no more than to insert English words and the names of things in one column, and the corresponding

Indian words in others on the same line, under the different heads of Delaware, Shawanees, Wiandots, &c.

Your appointment gave me pleasure, as every thing will do, which contributes to your satisfaction and emolument, because I have a sincere regard for you. In your leisure hours, whilst you remain on the Ohio in discharge of the trust reposed in you, I should be glad to know the real temper and designs of the western Indians, and the situation of affairs in that country, together with the politics of the people. As I am anxious to learn the nature of the navigation of Beaver Creek, the distance, and what kind of portage there is between it and Cayahoga, or any other nearer navigable water of Lake Erie, and the nature of the navigation of the latter; and also the navigation of the Muskingum, the distance and sort of portage across to the navigable waters of Cayahoga or Sandusky, and the kind of navigation therein; you would do me an acceptable favor to convey them to me, with the computed distances from the river Ohio by each of these routes to the Lake itself.

If you should not write to me by the return of the bearer, I would beg leave to add, that there is no way so certain of conveying letters to me, as to enclose them to your correspondent in Philadelphia, till a more direct post is established with this part of the country, accompanied by a request to him to put them in the post-office. Private conveyances, unless by a person coming immediately to my house, I have always found the most tedious and the most uncertain. From Philadelphia letters will reach me, frost permitting, in three or four days.

If you are at Pittsburg, this letter will be presented to you by Mr. Lear, a deserving young gentleman, who lives with me, and whom I beg leave to recommend to

your civilities. He is sent by me to see the situation of my property on Miller's Run, lately recovered, and to adopt some measures for the preservation and security of it. With sincere esteem and regard,

I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO DON DIEGO GARDOQUI, CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES FROM SPAIN TO THE UNITED STATES.

Mount Vernon, 1 December, 1786.

SIR,

I have had the honor to receive the letter, which your Excellency did me the favor of writing to me on the 18th ultimo, together with the enclosure from the Prime Minister of Spain, for which, and the translation, I pray you to accept my grateful thanks.

It will be to be regretted if a contrariety of sentiments, respecting the navigation of the Mississippi, should impede that harmony and mutual intercourse of interests so essential between nations, whose territories border on each other. I would fain hope, therefore, that the true and reciprocal benefits of Spain and the United States in this case, as well as in all others which may arise between them, will be coolly and dispassionately considered before the ultimatum on either side is fixed. There is no ground, on which treaties can be formed that will be found permanent or satisfactory, unless they have these for their basis. But, however necessary it may be to inculcate this doctrine upon others, your Excellency I am sure is too much a politician to need the remark, and too much a friend to these States to insist upon any measure, which the essential interests of your nation or the orders of your

court may not have directed, incompatible therewith. With very great consideration and respect,

I have the honor to be, &c.

TO JAMES MADISON.

Mount Vernon, 16 December, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 9th came to my hands the evening before last. The resolutions, which you say are inserted in the papers, I have not yet seen. The latter come irregularly, though I am a subscriber to *Hay's Gazette.*

Besides the reasons, which were assigned in my circular letter to the several State societies of the Cincinnati, for my non-attendance at the next general meeting to be held at Philadelphia on the first Monday in May next, their existed one, of a political nature, which operated more strongly on my mind, than all the others, and which in confidence I will now communicate to you.

When the Society was first formed, I am persuaded not a member of it conceived, that it would give birth to those jealousies, or be charged with those dangers, real or imaginary, with which the minds of many, and of some respectable characters in these States, seem to be agitated. The motives, which induced the officers to enter into it, were, I am positive, truly and frankly recited in the institution; one of which, and the principal, was to establish a charitable fund for the relief of such of their compatriots, and the widows and descendants of them, as were fit objects for such support, and for whom no provision had been made by the public. But, the trumpet being sounded, the alarm was spread-

ing far and wide. I readily perceived, therefore, that, unless a modification of the plan could be effected (to annihilate the Society altogether was impracticable on account of the foreign officers who had been admitted), irritations would arise, which would soon draw a line between the Society and their fellow citizens.

To avoid this, to conciliate the affections, and to convince the world of the purity of the plan, I exerted myself, and with much difficulty effected the changes, which appeared in the recommendation that proceeded from the general meeting to those of individual States. But the accomplishment of it was not easy; and I have since heard, that, while some States have acceded to the recommendation, others are not disposed to do so, alleging that unreasonable prejudices, and ill-founded jealousies, ought not to influence a measure laudable in its institution, and salutary in its objects and operation.

Under these circumstances it may readily be conceived, that the part I should have to act would be delicate. On the one hand, I might be charged with deserting the officers, who had nobly supported me, and had even treated me with uncommon attention and attachment; on the other, with supporting a measure incompatible with republican principles. I thought it best, therefore, without assigning this (the principal) reason, to decline the presidency and to excuse my attendance on the ground, which is firm and just, of the necessity of attending to my private concerns, and in conformity to my determination of spending the remainder of my days in a state of retirement; and of indisposition occasioned by a rheumatic complaint, with which at times I am a good deal afflicted; professing at the same time my entire approbation of the institution as altered, and the pleasure I feel at the subsidence

of those jealousies, which have yielded to the change, presuming on the general adoption of it.

I have been thus particular, to show, that, under circumstances like these, I should feel myself in an awkward situation to be in Philadelphia on another public occasion, during the sitting of this Society. That the present moment is pregnant with great and strange events, none who will cast his eyes around him can deny. What may be brought forth between this and May, to remove the difficulties which at present labor in my mind against the acceptance of the honor, which has lately been conferred on me by the Assembly, is not for me to predict; but I should think it incompatible with that candor, which ought to characterize an honest mind, not to declare, that, under my present view of the matter, after what I have written, I should be too much embarrassed by the meeting of these two bodies in the same place at the same moment, to be easy in my situation, and therefore that it would be improper to let my appointment stand in the way of another. Of this, you, who have had the whole matter before you, will judge; for, having received no other than a private intimation of my election, and being unacquainted with the formalities, which ought to be used on these occasions, silence may be deceptive, or considered as disrespectful. The imputation of both or either I would wish to avoid. This is the cause of the present disclosure to you immediately upon my receipt of your letter, which has been locked up by ice; for I have had no communication with Alexandria these eight days. With sentiments of great esteem and regard, I am, &c.

---

* In replying to this letter Mr. Madison said; "I have considered well the circumstances which it confidentially discloses, as well as those contained in your preceding favor. The difficulties, which they oppose to

TO EDMUND RANDOLPH, GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA.*

Mount Vernon, 21 December, 1786.

SIR,

I had not the honor of receiving your Excellency's favor of the 6th, with its enclosure, till last night.† I am sensible of the honor conferred on me by the general Assembly of this Commonwealth, in appointing me one of the deputies to a convention proposed to be held in the city of Philadelphia in May next, for the purpose of revising the federal constitution, and desirous on all occasions of testifying a ready obedience to the calls of my country; yet, Sir, there exist at this moment circumstances, which I am persuaded will render this fresh instance of confidence incompatible with other measures, which I had previously adopted, and from which seeing little prospect of disengaging myself, it would be disingenuous not to express a wish, that

---

an acceptance of the appointment, in which you are included, can as little be denied as they can fail to be regretted. But I am still inclined to think, that the posture of our affairs, if it should continue, would prevent any criticism on the situation, which the contemporary meetings would place you in; and wish that at least a door could be left open for your acceptance hereafter, in case the gathering clouds should become so dark and menacing, as to supersede every consideration but that of our national existence or safety. A suspense of your ultimate determination would be nowise inconvenient in a public view, as the executive are authorized to fill vacancies, and can fill them at any time; and, in any event, three out of seven deputies are authorized to represent the State. How far it may be admissible in another view will depend perhaps in some measure on the chance of your finally undertaking the service, but principally on the correspondence, which is now passing on the subject between yourself and the governor."

* He had recently been elected as successor to Patrick Henry.

† Communicating official intelligence of his having been unanimously chosen one of the delegates from Virginia for attending a general convention. His name was placed at the head of the deputation, consisting of seven persons as follows; George Washington, Patrick Henry, Edmund Randolph, John Blair, James Madison, George Mason, and George Wythe.

some other character, on whom greater reliance can be had, may be substituted in my place; the probability of non-attendance being too great to continue my appointment.

As no mind can be more deeply impressed than mine is with the critical situation of our affairs, resulting in a great measure from the want of sufficient powers in the federal head, and due respect to its ordinances, so consequently those, who do engage in the important business of removing these defects, will carry with them every good wish of mine, which the best dispositions towards the obtainment can bestow. I am, &c.*

TO DAVID HUMPHREYS.

Mount Vernon, 26 December, 1786.

My dear Humphreys,

I am much indebted to you for your several favors of the 1st, 9th, and 16th of November. The last came first. Mr. Morse, having in mind the old proverb, was determined not to make more haste than good speed in prosecuting his journey to Georgia; so I got the two first lately.

---

* To the above letter Governor Randolph replied. "Although compelled by duty to lay before the Council your answer to my notification of your appointment to Philadelphia, I was happy to find them concurring with me in the propriety of entreating you not to decide on a refusal immediately. Perhaps the obstacles now in view may be removed before May; and the nomination of a successor, if necessary at all, will be as effectually made some time hence as now. Perhaps too (and indeed I fear the event) every other consideration may seem of little weight, when compared with the crisis, which may then hang over the United States. I hope, therefore, that you will excuse me for holding up your letter for the present, and waiting until time shall discover the result of the commotions now prevailing." — *Richmond, January 4th*, 1787.

For your publication respecting the treatment of Captain Asgill, I am exceedingly obliged to you. The manner of making it is the best that could be devised, whilst the matter will prove the illiberality as well as fallacy of the reports, which have been circulated on that occasion, and which are ascribed to that officer as the author.

It is with the deepest and most heartfelt concern I perceive, by some late paragraphs extracted from the Boston papers, that the insurgents of Massachusetts, far from being satisfied with the redress offered by their General Court, are still acting in open violation of law and government, and have obliged the chief magistrate in a decided tone to call upon the militia of the State to support the constitution. What, gracious God! is man, that there should be such inconsistency and perfidiousness in his conduct? It was but the other day, that we were shedding our blood to obtain the constitutions under which we now live; constitutions of our own choice and making; and now we are unsheathing the sword to overturn them. The thing is so unaccountable, that I hardly know how to realize it, or to persuade myself, that I am not under the illusion of a dream.

My mind, previous to the receipt of your letter of the 1st ultimo, had often been agitated by a thought similar to the one you have expressed respecting an old friend of yours; but Heaven forbid that a crisis should come, when he shall be driven to the necessity of making choice of either of the alternatives there mentioned.* Let me entreat you, my dear Sir, to keep

* The following extract will explain this paragraph, and show that the "old friend" alluded to was General Washington himself.

"In case of civil discord," said Mr. Humphreys, "I have already told you, it was seriously my opinion, that you could not remain neuter, and

me advised of the situation of affairs in your quarter. I can depend upon your accounts. Newspaper paragraphs, unsupported by other testimony, are often contradictory and bewildering. At one time, these insurgents are spoken of as a mere mob; at other times, as systematic in all their proceedings. If the first, I would fain hope, that like other mobs it will, however formidable, be of short duration. If the latter, there are surely men of consequence and abilities behind the curtain, who move the puppets, and the designs of whom may be deep and dangerous. They may be instigated by British counsel, actuated by ambitious motives, or, being influenced by dishonest principles, would rather see the country in the horrors of civil discord, than do what justice would dictate to an honest mind.

I had scarcely despatched my circular to the several State Societies of the Cincinnati, when I received letters from some of the principal members of our Assembly expressing a wish, that they might be permitted to name me as one of the deputies of this State to the convention proposed to be held at Philadelphia the first of May next. I immediately wrote to my particular friend Mr. Madison, and gave similar reasons to the others.* Should this matter be further pressed, (which I hope it will not be, as I have no inclination to go,) what had I best do? You, as an indifferent person,

---

that you would be obliged in self-defence to take part on one side or the other, or withdraw from the continent. Your friends are of the same opinion; and I believe you are convinced it is impossible to have more disinterested and zealous friends than those, who have been about your person." — *New Haven, November 1st.*

* In the original letter a reference is here made to enclosures, which were extracts from the correspondence with Mr. Madison and Mr. Randolph, respecting the appointment of General Washington as a delegate to the convention, and his reasons for declining to accept it.

and one who is much better acquainted with the sentiments and views of the Cincinnati than I am, (for in this State, where the recommendations of the general meeting have been agreed to, hardly any thing is said about it,) and also with the temper of the people and state of politics at large, can determine upon better ground and fuller evidence than myself; especially as you have opportunities of knowing in what light the States at the eastward consider the convention, and the measures they are pursuing to contravene or give efficiency to it.

On the last occasion,* only five States were represented; none east of New York. Why the New England governments did not appear, I am yet to learn; for, of all others, the distractions and turbulent temper of these people would, I should have thought, have afforded the strongest evidence of the necessity of competent powers somewhere. That the federal government is nearly if not quite at a stand, none will deny. The first question then is, shall it be annihilated or supported? If the latter, the proposed convention is an object of the first magnitude, and should be sustained by all the friends of the present constitution. In the other case, if, on a full and dispassionate revision, the continuance shall be adjudged impracticable or unwise, as only delaying an event which must ere long take place, would it not be better for such a meeting to suggest some other, to avoid if possible civil discord or other impending evils? I must candidly confess, as we could not remain quiet more than three or four years in time of peace, under the constitutions of our own choosing, which it was believed, in many States at least, were formed with deliberation and wis-

* The convention at Annapolis.

dom, I see little prospect either of our agreeing upon any other, or that we should remain long satisfied under it if we could. Yet I would wish any thing and every thing essayed to prevent the effusion of blood, and to avert the humiliating and contemptible figure we are about to make in the annals of mankind.

If this second attempt to convene the States, for the purposes proposed in the report of the partial representation at Annapolis in September, should also prove abortive, it may be considered as an unequivocal evidence, that the States are not likely to agree on any general measure, which is to pervade the Union, and of course that there is an end of federal government. The States, therefore, which make this last dying essay to avoid these misfortunes, would be mortified at the issue, and their deputies would return home chagrined at their ill success and disappointment. This would be a disagreeable circumstance for any one of them to be in, but more particularly so for one in my situation. If no further application is made to me, of course I shall not attend; if there is, I am under no obligation to do it, but, as I have had so many proofs of your friendship, and know your abilities to judge, and your opportunities of learning the politics of the day on the points I have mentioned, you would oblige me by a full and confidential communication of your sentiments.

Peace and tranquillity prevail in this State. The Assembly, by a very great majority and in very emphatical terms, have rejected an application for paper money, and spurned the idea of fixing the value of military certificates by a scale of depreciation. In some other respects, too, the proceedings of the present session have been marked with justice, and a strong desire of supporting the federal system. I am, &c.

TO HENRY KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 26 December, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

Nothing but the pleasing hope of seeing you under this roof in the course of last month, which I was disposed to extend even to the present moment, has kept me till this time from acknowledging the receipt of your obliging favor of the 23d of October. Despairing now of that pleasure, I thank you for the above letter, and the subsequent one of the 17th instant, which came to hand yesterday evening.

Lamentable as the conduct of the insurgents of Massachusetts is, I am exceedingly obliged to you for the advices respecting them; and pray you most ardently to continue the accounts of their proceedings, as I can depend upon them, without having my mind bewildered with those vague and contradictory reports, which are presented to us in newspapers, and please at one moment only to make the mortification of the next more keenly bitter.

I feel, my dear General Knox, infinitely more than I can express to you, for the disorders, which have arisen in these States. Good God! Who, besides a Tory, could have foreseen, or a Briton predicted them? I do assure you, that even at this moment, when I reflect upon the present prospect of our affairs, it seems to me to be like the vision of a dream. My mind can scarcely realize it as a thing in actual existence; so strange, so wonderful does it appear to me. In this, as in most other matters, we are too slow. When this spirit first dawned, it might probably have been easily checked; but it is scarcely within the reach of human ken, at this moment, to say when, where, or how it will terminate. There are combustibles in every State, to

which a spark might set fire. In this a perfect calm prevails at present; and a prompt disposition to support and give energy to the federal system is discovered.

The resolutions of the present session respecting a paper emission and military certificates have stamped justice and liberality on the proceedings of the Assembly. By a late act, it seems very desirous of a general convention to revise and amend the federal constitution. *Apropos*; what prevented the eastern States from attending the September meeting at Annapolis? Of all the States in the Union it should seem, that a measure of this sort, distracted as they were with internal commotions and experiencing the want of energy in the government, would have been most pleasing to them. What are the prevailing sentiments of the one now proposed to be held in Philadelphia in May next? How will it be attended? You are at the fountain of intelligence, where the wisdom of the nation, it is to be presumed, is concentred; consequently better able, as I have had sufficient experience of your intelligence, confidence, and candor, to solve these questions.

The Maryland Assembly has been violently agitated by the question for a paper emission. It has been carried in the House of Delegates; but what has been or may be the fate of the bill in the Senate, I have not yet heard. The partisans in favor of the measure in the lower House threaten, *it is said*, a secession, if it is rejected by that branch of the legislature. Thus are we advancing. In regretting, which I have often done with the keenest sorrow, the death of our much lamented friend General Greene, I have accompanied it of late with a query, whether he would not have preferred such an exit to the scenes, which, it is more than probable, many of his compatriots may live to bemoan.

In both your letters you intimate, that the men of

reflection, principle, and property in New England, feeling the inefficiency of their present government, are contemplating a change; but you are not explicit with respect to its nature. It has been supposed, that the constitution of the State of Massachusetts was amongst the most energetic in the Union. May not these disorders then be ascribed to an indulgent exercise of the powers of administration? If your laws authorize it, and your powers are equal to the suppression of these tumults in the first instance, delay and unnecessary expedients were improper. These are rarely well applied; and the same causes would produce similar effects in any form of government, if the powers of it are not exercised. I ask the question for information. I know nothing of the facts.

That Great Britain will be an unconcerned spectator of the present insurrections, if they continue, is not to be expected. That she is at this moment sowing the seeds of jealousy and discontent among the various tribes of Indians on our frontiers, admits of no doubt in my mind; and that she will improve every opportunity to foment the spirit of turbulence within the bowels of the United States, with a view of distracting our governments and promoting divisions, is with me not less certain. Her first manœuvres in this will no doubt be covert, and may remain so till the period shall arrive when a decided line of conduct may avail her. Charges of violating the treaty, and other pretexts, will then not be wanting to color overt acts, tending to effect the great objects of which she has long been in pursuit. A man is now at the head of their American affairs, well calculated to conduct measures of this kind, and more than probably was selected for this purpose. We ought not therefore to sleep nor to slumber. Vigilance in watching and vigor in acting are become

in my opinion indispensably necessary. If the powers are inadequate, amend or alter them; but do not let us sink into the lowest state of humiliation and contempt, and become a by-word in all the earth. I think with you, that the spring will unfold important and distressing scenes, unless much wisdom and good management are displayed in the interim. Adieu. Be assured no man has a higher esteem and regard for you, than I have; none is more sincerely your friend.

TO HENRY KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 3 February, 1787.

My dear Sir,

I feel myself exceedingly obliged to you for the full and friendly communications in your letters of the 14th, 21st, and 25th ultimo, and I shall be extremely anxious to know the issue of the movements of the forces, that were assembling in support of, and in opposition to, the constitution of Massachusetts. The moment is important. If the government shrinks, or is unable to enforce its laws, fresh manœuvres will be displayed by the insurgents, anarchy and confusion must prevail, and every thing will be turned topsy-turvy in that State, where it is not probable the mischief will end.

In your letter of the 14th you express a wish to be informed of my intention, respecting the convention proposed to be held at Philadelphia in May next. In confidence I inform you, that it is not, at this time, my intention to attend it. When this matter was first moved in the Assembly of this State, some of the principal characters of it wrote to me, requesting that they might be permitted to put my name in the delegation. To this I objected. They again pressed, and I again

refused, assigning among other reasons my having declined meeting the Society of the Cincinnati at that place about the same time, and that I thought it would be disrespectful to that body, to whom I owe much, to be there on any other occasion. Notwithstanding these intimations, my name was inserted in the act. An official communication thereof was made to me by the executive, to whom, at the same time that I expressed my sense of the confidence reposed in me, I declared that, as I saw no prospect of my attending, it was my wish that my name might not remain in the delegation to the exclusion of another. On this I have been requested in emphatical terms not to decide absolutely, as no inconvenience would result from the new appointment of another, at least for some time yet.

Thus the matter stands, which is the reason of my saying to you *in confidence*, that at present I hold to my first intention not to go. In the mean while, as I have the fullest conviction of your friendship for me, know your ability to judge, and your means of information, I shall receive any communications from you on this subject with thankfulness. My first wish is to do for the best, and to act with propriety. You know me too well to believe, that reserve or concealment of any opinion or circumstance would be at all agreeable to me. The legality of this convention I do not mean to discuss, nor how problematical the issue of it may be. That powers are wanting none can deny. Through what medium they are to be derived will, like other matters, engage the attention of the wise. That, which takes the shortest course to obtain them, in my opinion will, under present circumstances, be found best; otherwise, like a house on fire, whilst the most regular mode of extinguishing the flames is contended for, the building is reduced to ashes. My opinion of

the wants of the federal government are well known. My public annunciations and private declarations have uniformly expressed these sentiments; and, however constitutional it may be for Congress to point out the defects of the federal system, I am strongly inclined to believe, that it would not be found the most efficacious channel for the recommendations, more especially the alterations, for reasons too obvious to enumerate.*

The system, on which you seem disposed to build a national government, is certainly more energetic, and I dare say in every point of view more desirable than the present, which from experience we find is not only slow, debilitated, and liable to be thwarted by every breath, but is defective in that secrecy, which, for the accomplishment of many of the most important national objects, is indispensably necessary.† Besides, having the legislative, executive, and judiciary departments concentred, is exceptionable. But, at the same time that I give this opinion, I believe the political vessel will yet be much tossed, and possibly be wrecked altogether, before that or any thing like it will be adopted. The darling sovereignty of each State, the governors elect or to be elected, the legislators, with a long tribe of others, whose political importance will be lessened,

* To Mr. Jay he wrote, touching upon the same subject, more than a month later; "I would fain try what the wisdom of the proposed convention will suggest, and what can be effected by their counsels. It may be the last peaceable mode of essaying the practicability of the present form, without a greater lapse of time, than the exigency of our affairs will allow. In strict propriety, a convention so holden may not be legal. Congress, however, may give it a coloring by recommendation, which would fit it more to the taste, without proceeding to a definition of the powers. This, however constitutionally it might be done, would not in my opinion be expedient." — *March 10th.*

† The letter, containing General Knox's views here alluded to, as also the opinions of Mr. Jay and Mr. Madison on the same subject, may be seen in the APPENDIX, No. III.

if not annihilated, would give their weight or opposition to such a revolution. I may be speaking without book; for, scarcely ever going off my own farms, I see few people, who do not call upon me, and am very little acquainted with the sentiments of the great public. Indeed, after what I have seen, or rather after what I have heard, I shall be surprised at nothing; for, if three years since any person had told me, that there would have been such a formidable rebellion as exists at this day against the laws and constitution of our own making, I should have thought him a bedlamite, a fit subject for a mad-house. Adieu. You know how much, and how sincerely I am your ever affectionate and most obedient servant.

TO THOMAS STONE.*

Mount Vernon, 16 February, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 30th ultimo came duly to hand. To give an opinion in a cause of so much importance as that, which has warmly agitated the two branches of your legislature, and which, from the appeal that is made, is likely to create great and perhaps dangerous divisions, is rather a delicate matter; but, as this diversity of opinion is on a subject, which has, I believe, occupied the minds of most men, and as my sentiments thereon have been fully and decidedly expressed long before the Assembly either of Maryland or this State was convened, I do not scruple to declare, that, if I had a voice in your legislature, it would have been given decidedly against a paper emission upon the gen-

* Member of the Senate of Maryland.

eral principles of its utility as a representative, and the necessity of it as a medium.*

To assign reasons for this opinion would be as unnecessary as tedious. The ground has been so often trod, that a place hardly remains untouched. In a word, the necessity arising from a want of specie is represented as greater than it really is. I contend, that it is by the substance, not with the shadow of a thing, we are to be benefited. The wisdom of man, in my humble opinion, cannot at this time devise a plan, by which the credit of paper money would be long supported; consequently depreciation keeps pace with the quantity of the emission, and articles, for which it is exchanged, rise in a greater ratio than the sinking value of the money. Wherein, then, is the farmer, the planter, the artisan benefited? The debtor may be, because, as I have observed, he gives the shadow in lieu of the substance; and, in proportion to his gain, the creditor or the body politic suffers. Whether it be a legal tender or not, it will, as has been observed very truly, leave no alternative. It must be that or nothing. An evil equally great is, the door it immediately opens for speculation, by which the least designing, and per-

* A law had been proposed in the legislature of Maryland, which had passed the House of Delegates, for issuing bills of credit to the amount of three hundred and fifty thousand pounds, to be loaned by the State in various sums, the whole redeemable in ten years, and drawing interest at six per cent. payable annually. The Senate unanimously refused their assent to this proposition; and the differences between the two bodies rose to such a height, that the former resolved to adjourn for two months, and refer the subject to the people. This was deemed a very objectionable course by the Senate, inasmuch as it was designed to coerce them to act against their judgment, and thus deprive them of the freedom and independence, which it was a special object of the constitution to secure to that branch of the legislature.

The objections to this paper emission did not rest wholly on the ground of the inexpediency of a paper currency as such, but were derived in part from the peculiar circumstances of the time. It was necessary for

haps most valuable, part of the community are preyed upon by the more knowing and crafty speculators.

But, contrary to my intention and declaration, I am offering reasons in support of my opinion; reasons too, which of all others are least pleasing to the advocate for paper money. I shall therefore only observe generally, that so many people have suffered by former emissions, that, like a burnt child who dreads the fire, no person will touch it who can possibly avoid it. The natural consequence of which will be, that the specie, which remains unexported, will be instantly locked up. With great esteem and regard, I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO HENRY KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 25 February, 1787.

Accept, my dear General Knox, my affectionate thanks for your obliging favors. They were exceed-

---

each State in the confederacy to pay a large portion of the annual requisitions of Congress in specie, by which alone the large demands for discharging the interest of the national debt could be answered. This specie must be collected from the people by taxation, an end, which would be rather frustrated than promoted by a local paper currency issued on the credit of an individual State, especially as the country was already flooded with paper securities, that had been rendered indispensable during the war. If a State issued paper, it could be disposed of only by loans on bonds or mortgages; and this paper must be received for taxes, or it would immediately depreciate, and create new embarrassments. But if a State should take its own paper for taxes, where was the specie to be found for paying its quota to the national government? This paper money must necessarily be exchanged for specie, before it could be made available for that object. So far from increasing the quantity of metallic currency, the effect of a surplusage of paper would be to diminish it; and hence the State would be obliged to go abroad to procure it, for the purpose of liquidating the claims of Congress, and to obtain it through a disadvantageous negotiation of its own paper. Such was the view taken by the opponents to the measure.

ingly satisfactory, and gave relief to my mind, which was filled with great anxiety and uneasiness for the issue of General Lincoln's operations, and the dignity of the government.* On the prospect of the happy termination of this insurrection I sincerely congratulate you, hoping that good may result from the cloud of evils, which threatened not only Massachusetts, but by spreading its baneful influence might endanger the tranquillity of other States. Surely Shays must be either a weak man, the dupe of some characters that are yet behind the curtain, or he has been deceived by his followers; or, which may be as likely as any thing perhaps, he did not conceive that there was energy enough in the government to bring matters to the crisis to which they have been pushed. It is to be hoped the General Court of that State concurred in the report of the committee, that a rebellion actually existed. This would be decisive, and the most likely means of putting the finishing stroke to the business.

We have nothing new in this quarter, except the dissensions which prevailed in Maryland, and occasioned the adjournment of the Assembly, that an appeal might be made to the people for their sentiments on the conduct of their representatives in the senate and delegation respecting a paper emission, which was warmly advocated by the latter and opposed by the former, and which may be productive of great and perhaps dangerous divisions. Our affairs generally seem to be approaching some awful crisis. God only knows what the result will be.

* Great pains had been taken by General Knox to collect intelligence of the movements for quelling the insurrection in Massachusetts, not only from official but private sources; and he communicated all the particulars to General Washington from time to time, as soon as they came to hand.

I hope the postponement of your journey to this State does not amount to a relinquishment of it, and that it is unnecessary to assure you of the sincere pleasure I should feel at seeing you under this roof. With sentiments of the warmest friendship, I am yours most affectionately.

TO HENRY KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 8 March, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

Will you permit me to give you the trouble of making an indirect but precise inquiry into the allegation of the enclosed letter? I flatter myself, that, from the vicinity of Elizabethtown to New York, and the constant intercourse between the two, you will be able to do it without much trouble. It is but little in my power to afford the pecuniary aids required by the writer; but, if the facts as set forth be true, I should feel very happy in offering my mite, and rendering any services in my power on the occasion. Be so good, when you write to me on this subject, as to return the letters and translations.*

The observations contained in your letter of the 22d ultimo, respecting the disfranchisement of a number of the citizens of Massachusetts for their rebellious conduct, may be just; and yet, without exemplary punishment, similar disorders may be excited by other ambitious and discontented characters. Punishments however should fall on the chiefs.†

---

* Respecting a Frenchman, of good family and character, who had been reduced to necessitous circumstances by ill health and misfortune, and had applied to General Washington for relief.

† *From General Knox's Letter.* — "The storm in Massachusetts is sub-

I am glad to hear, that Congress are about to remove some of the stumblingblocks, which lie in the way of the proposed convention. A convention is an expedient I wish to see tried; after which, if the present general government is not efficient, a conviction of the propriety of a change will spread through every rank and class of people; till which, however necessary it may appear in the eyes of the most discerning, my opinion is, that it cannot be effected without great contention and much confusion. It is among the evils, and perhaps not the smallest, of democratical governments, that the people must always *feel* before they will *see*. When this happens, they are roused to action. Hence it is, that those kinds of government are so slow.

I am indirectly and delicately pressed to attend this convention. Several reasons are opposed to it in my mind, and not the least, having declined attending the general meeting of the Cincinnati, which is to be held

---

siding for the present. But what effects the disfranchisement of a great body of people will create, it is not easy to say. A numerous body of high-spirited men, conceiving themselves oppressed by the government composed of their equals, will regard the oppression more, than the causes which gave birth to it. They will be probably plotting perpetually to relieve themselves from burdens, which they will think intolerable. This will manifest itself variously, and perhaps in some cases in open hostility. Although the insurgents have fled and are dispersed, yet the government conceives itself unsafe without a force. Accordingly fifteen hundred men are raised for five months. This force is to be posted by detachments throughout the disaffected counties. Neither discipline nor prudence will restrain the troops to such conduct as to avoid offence. The people will think themselves curbed and tyrannized over. The troops will consider the least sympton of discontent as a step to open hostility. One or the other must be masters. The operation will require force; and hence probably springs a standing army for the support of government. My conjectures may be erroneous, but it is not improbable that something like this will result from the commotions of Massachusetts." — *February 22d.*

This subject is explained at large in MINOT'S *History of the Insurrections in Massachusetts*, p. 160. See also BRADFORD'S *History of Massachusetts*, Vol. II. p. 300.

in Philadelphia at the same time, on account of the disrespect it might seem to offer to that Society, were I to attend on another occasion. A thought has lately run through my mind, however, which is accompanied with embarrassment. It is whether my non-attendance in the convention will not be considered as dereliction of republicanism; nay, more, whether other motives may not, however injuriously, be ascribed for my not exerting myself on this occasion in support of it. Under these circumstances let me pray you, my dear Sir, to inform me confidentially what the public expectation is on this head; that is, whether I shall or ought to be there. You are much in the way of obtaining the knowledge, and I can depend upon your friendship, candor, and judgment in the communication of it, as far as it shall appear to you. My final determination, if what I have already given to the executive of this State is not considered in that light, cannot be delayed beyond the time necessary for your reply. With the most affectionate regard, I am, &c.*

* He wrote to some of his other confidential friends, making a similar request, particularly to Colonel Humphreys. From the different opinions of his correspondents on this subject it would appear, that he was, after all, obliged to be guided rather by the dictates of his own judgment, than by any light he derived from other sources.

In an early letter General Knox had spoken somewhat doubtingly; but after Congress had sanctioned the meeting of a convention, and recommended it to the States, his impressions seem to have become decided. "You will have observed," said he, "that Congress has passed an act approving the idea of a convention, so worded as to include all appointments already made. This circumstance will remove all objections to the convention on account of its legality." — *February 27th.* In reply to the above letter he spoke more fully and more directly to the point.

"As you have thought proper, my dear Sir, to request my opinion respecting your attendance at the convention, I shall give it with the utmost sincerity and frankness. I imagine that your own satisfaction, or chagrin, and that of your friends, will depend entirely on the result of the convention. For I take it for granted, that, however reluctantly you may acquiesce, you will be constrained to accept of the president's chair.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 23 March, 1787.

My dear Sir,

Ever since the disorders in your State began to grow serious, I have been peculiarly anxious to hear from that quarter. General Knox has from time to time

---

Hence the proceedings of the convention will more immediately be appropriated to you than to any other person. Were the convention to propose only amendments and patchwork to the present defective confederation, your reputation would in a degree suffer. But, were an energetic and judicious system to be proposed with your signature, it would be a circumstance highly honorable to your fame, in the judgment of the present and future ages; and doubly entitle you to the glorious republican epithet, *The Father of your Country.*

"But, the men generally chosen being of the first information, great reliance may be placed on the wisdom and vigor of their counsels and judgment, and therefore the balance of my opinion preponderates greatly in favor of your attendance. I am persuaded, that your name has had already great influence to induce the States to come into the measure, that your attendance will be grateful, that your presence would confer on the assembly a national complexion, and that it would more than any other circumstance induce a compliance with the propositions of the convention." — *March 19th.*

The following are extracts from letters written by Colonel Humphreys on the same subject.

"I may then with justice assert, that, so far from having seen any reason to change my opinion respecting the inexpediency of your attending the convention in May next, additional arguments have occurred to confirm me in the sentiment. The probability, which existed when I wrote before, that nothing general or effectual would be done by the convention, amounts now almost to a certainty; for the Assembly of Rhode Island, as I am lately given to understand, have decided against sending any representation. Connecticut is under the influence of a few such narrow-minded politicians, that I question very much whether the legislature will choose members to appear in the convention; and, if they do, my apprehension is still greater, that they will be sent on purpose to impede any salutary measures that might be proposed. This there is little doubt is actually the case with New York, as it is asserted that two out of their three delegates are directly anti-federal. What chance is there then, that entire unanimity will prevail? Should this be the fact, however, would not the several members as it were pledge themselves for the execution of their system? And would not this inevitably launch you again on a sea of politics? As you justly observe, matters must

transmitted to me the state of affairs as they came to his hands; but nothing has given such full and satisfactory information as the particular detail of events, which you have been so good as to favor me with, and for which you will please to accept my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments.* Permit me also, my dear Sir, to offer you my sincerest congratulations upon your success. The suppression of those tumults

---

probably grow worse before they will be better. Since I had the honor of addressing you last on this subject, I have been in the way of hearing the speculations of many different characters on the proposed convention, and their conjectures on the part you would act in consequence of your appointment to it. I have heard few express any sanguine expectations concerning the successful issue of the meeting, and I think not one has judged it eligible for you to attend. In this part of the Union, your not attending will not be considered either by the federal or anti-federal party as a dereliction of republicanism. The former believe it unimportant, or perhaps injurious to the national interests, for you to come forward at present; the latter look upon the convention as rather intended to subvert than support republicanism, and will readily excuse your non-attendance." — *New Haven, March 24th.*

Again; "I mentioned in my last that I had not conversed with a single character of consideration, who judged it proper for you to attend the convention. I have now seen several, who think it highly interesting that you should be there. Gouverneur Morris and some others have wished me to use whatever influence I might have to induce you to come. I could not have promised this without counteracting my own judgment. I will not, however, hesitate to say, that I do not conceive your attendance can hazard such personal ill consequences, as were to be apprehended before the proposed meeting had been legitimated by the sanction of Congress." — *Fairfield, April 9th.*

When the convention was first proposed, several of General Washington's friends were not in favor of his attending it. He received anonymous letters, apparently from high sources, advising him against the measure; but, when the plan was found to be approved by the public, and especially after Congress had recommended it to the States, their opinions were generally changed. This view of the case will account, in some degree, for the apparently unsettled state of his own mind, till the time when it was necessary to decide.

* General Lincoln had sent to General Washington a *Memoir*, extending to forty-two folio manuscript pages, and containing a history of the insurrection in Massachusetts. It consisted of a narrative of the principal events, interspersed with a copy of the official correspondence.

and insurrections, with so little bloodshed, is an event as happy as it was unexpected; it must have been peculiarly agreeable to you, being placed in so delicate and critical a situation.

I am extremely happy to find, that your sentiments upon the disfranchising act are such as they are. Upon my first seeing it, I formed an opinion perfectly coincident with yours, namely, that measures more generally lenient might have produced equally as good an effect, without entirely alienating the affections of the people from the government. As it now stands, it affects a large body of men. Some of them, perhaps, it deprives of the means of gaining a livelihood. The friends and connexions of those people will feel themselves wounded in a degree, and I think it will rob the State of a number of its inhabitants, if it produces nothing more.

It gives me great pleasure to hear, that your eastern settlements succeed so well.* The sincere regard which I have for you will always make your prosperity a part of my happiness. I am, my dear Sir, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 25 March, 1787.

My dear Marquis,

Since writing you a hasty letter in November last, by a vessel which was then passing my door, I have been honored with your kind and obliging favor of the 26th of October. For the affectionate sentiments with which it is replete, I pray you to accept my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments, and the strongest assurances of everlasting friendship.

* Settlements on the wild lands in the Province of Maine.

I am writing to you, my dear Sir, but where will the letter find you? In Crimea, Constantinople, or the Archipelago? Or will it await your return to Paris? About this time you must, according to your account, be setting out for the first to make the tour of the last. If it should get to your hands before the interview you will have with her Imperial Majesty, it will afford you an opportunity of informing her personally, that the request she made to you for obtaining an Indian vocabulary is in a proper train for execution. I have the strongest assurances, both from General Butler, who is now Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and residing on the Ohio, and Mr. Hutchins, the geographer, who is also employed in that country, that they will delay no time, nor spare any pains, to make it as perfect as they can. As soon as I receive it, I will forward it to you.

I fear this long trip will be the means of postponing your visit to this country, to the very great regret of all your friends, and particularly so of me. You will long ere this have heard of the insurrection in the State of Massachusetts. To trace the causes would be difficult, and to detail its progress is unnecessary, as the steps taken by that government, and the proceedings generally, are very minutely related in the public gazettes, with which I am informed you are regularly supplied. I shall therefore proceed to the more pleasing part of the business, and inform you, that the tumults are at an end, and the principals have fled to Canada. It is apprehended, however, that an act of the legislature disfranchising those, who were aiding or abetting, is pregnant with as much evil as good, because its operation is too extensive.

These disorders are evident marks of a defective government. Indeed, the thinking part of the people of this country are now so well satisfied of this fact,

that most of the legislatures have appointed, and the rest it is said will appoint, delegates to meet at Philadelphia on the second Monday in May next in a general convention of the States, to revise and correct the defects of the federal system. Congress have also recognised and recommended the measure. What may be the result of this meeting is hardly within the compass of human wisdom to predict. It is considered, however, as the last essay to support the present form.

Your endeavours, my dear Marquis, to serve this country are unremitted. The letter from the minister to Mr. Jefferson (who I am happy to find is so much respected and esteemed at the court of France), which you had the goodness to send me, is a recent instance of it. And I wish the conduct of the States may entitle them to a continuation of your good offices, as I also do, that the Protestants may be grateful for the relief you have afforded them.

The Dutch, though a phlegmatic people, have been too long quarrelling to come now to blows; and, if matters there can be settled without it, the probability is that the tranquillity of Europe may be of some continuance, unless the disagreement between the Russians and Turks should become more serious. It seems almost nugatory to dispute about the best mode of dealing with the Algerines, when we have neither money to buy their friendship, nor the means of punishing them for their depredations upon our people and trade. If we could command the latter, I should be clearly in sentiment with you and Mr. Jefferson, that chastisement would be more honorable, and much to be preferred to the purchased friendship of these barbarians. By me, who perhaps do not understand the policy by which the maritime powers are actuated, it has ever been considered as reflecting the highest disgrace on

them to become tributary to such banditti, who might for half the sum that is paid them be exterminated from the earth.

This want must turn our faces from the western posts, even should it be found that we have not been the first infractors of the treaty. In the investigation of this matter, as there has been crimination on both sides, the secretary of foreign affairs is now employed.

General Greene's death is an event, which has given such general concern, and is so much regretted by his numerous friends, that I can scarce persuade myself to touch upon it, even so far as to say, that in him you lost a man, who affectionately regarded and was a sincere admirer of you. I have no expression, that can convey to you the warmth of my friendship and affectionate attachment. Adieu. Believe me ever yours.

TO EDMUND RANDOLPH, GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA.

Mount Vernon, 28 March, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 11th did not come to my hand till the 24th, and since then till now I have been too much indisposed to acknowledge the receipt of it.*

It was the decided intention of the letter I had the honor of writing to your Excellency on the 21st of

---

* *From Governor Randolph's Letter.* — "I must call upon your friendship to excuse me for again mentioning the convention at Philadelphia. Your determination having been fixed on a thorough review of your situation, I feel like an intruder when I again hint a wish, that you would join the delegation. But every day brings forth some new crisis, and the confederation is, I fear, the last anchor of our hope. Congress have taken up the subject, and appointed the second Monday in May next, as the day of meeting. Indeed, from my private correspondence, I doubt whether the existence of that body, even through this year, may not be questionable under our present circumstances." — *Richmond, March 11th.*

December last to inform you, that it was not convenient for me to attend the convention proposed to be held at Philadelphia in May next; and I had entertained hopes, that another had been, or soon would be, appointed in my place, inasmuch as it is not only inconvenient for me to leave home, but because there will be, I apprehend, too much cause to charge my conduct with inconsistency in again appearing on a public theatre, after a public declaration to the contrary, and because it will, I fear, have a tendency to sweep me back into the tide of public affairs, when retirement and ease are so much desired by me, and so essentially necessary.

However, as my friends, with a degree of solicitude which is unusual, seem to wish for my attendance on this occasion, I have come to a resolution to go, if my health will permit, provided from the lapse of time between the date of your Excellency's letter and this reply the executive may not (the reverse of which would be highly pleasing to me) have turned their thoughts to some other character; for, independently of all other considerations, I have of late been so much afflicted with a rheumatic complaint in my shoulder, that at times I am hardly able to raise my hand to my head, or turn myself in bed. This consequently might prevent my attendance, and eventually a representation of the State, which would afflict me more sensibly than the disorder that occasioned it.

If, after the expression of these sentiments, the executive should consider me as one of the delegates, I would thank your Excellency for the earliest advice of it; because, if I am able and should go to Philadelphia, I shall have some previous arrangements to make, and would set off for that place the 1st or 2d of May, that I might be there in time to account personally for my

conduct to the general meeting of the Cincinnati, which is to convene the first Monday of that month. My feelings would be much hurt, if that body should otherwise ascribe my attending the one, and not the other, to a disrespectful inattention to the Society, when the fact is, that I shall ever retain the most lively and affectionate regard for the members of it, on account of their attachment to me and uniform support upon many trying occasions, as well as on account of their public virtues, patriotism, and sufferings.

I hope your Excellency will be found among the attending delegates. I should be glad to be informed who the others are; and I cannot conclude without once more and in emphatical terms praying, that, if there is not a *decided* representation in prospect without me, another may be chosen in my room without ceremony and without delay, for the reasons already assigned. It would be unfortunate, indeed, if the State, which was the mover of this convention, should be unrepresented in it. With great respect, I have the honor to be your Excellency's most obedient servant.

TO JAMES MADISON, IN CONGRESS.*

Mount Vernon, 31 March, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

At the same time that I acknowledge the receipt of your obliging favor of the 21st ultimo from New York, I promise to avail myself of your indulgence to write only when it is convenient to me. If this should not occasion a relaxation on your part, I shall become very much your debtor, and possibly, like others in

* Mr. Madison had taken his seat in Congress as a delegate from Virginia on the 12th of February.

similar circumstances, when the debt is burthensome, may feel a disposition to apply the sponge, or, what is nearly akin to it, pay you off in depreciated paper, which, being a legal tender, or, what is tantamount, being *that* or *nothing*, you cannot refuse. You will receive the nominal value, and that you know quiets the conscience, and makes all things easy with the debtor.

I am glad to find that Congress have recommended to the States to appear in the convention. I think the reasons in favor have a preponderancy over those against it. It is idle in my opinion to suppose, that Congress can be insensible to the inadequacy of the powers under which they act, and that, seeing it, they should not recommend a revision of the federal system; especially when it is considered by many as the only constitutional mode by which the defects can be remedied. Had Congress proceeded to a delineation of the powers, it might have sounded an alarm; but, as the case is, I do not conceive that it will have that effect.*

* The commissioners, who had met at Annapolis in September, 1786, sent a letter to Congress, accompanied by their address to the several States, proposing a convention at Philadelphia on the second Monday of May. These papers were taken up by Congress, and referred to a committee, consisting of one member from each State, who reported in favor of recommending to the several legislatures to send delegates. The following preamble and resolution were accordingly adopted.

"Whereas there is provision in the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union for making alterations therein, by the assent of a Congress of the United States, and of the legislatures of the several States; and whereas experience has evinced, that there are defects in the present confederation, as a means to remedy which, several of the States, and particularly the State of New York, by express instructions to their delegates in Congress, have suggested a convention for the purposes expressed in the following resolution, and such convention appearing to be the most probable means of establishing in these States a firm national government;

"*Resolved*, That in the opinion of Congress it is expedient, that, on the second Monday in May next, a convention of delegates, who shall

From the acknowledged abilities of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, I have no doubt of his having ably investigated the infractions of the treaty on both sides. Much is it to be regretted, however, that there should have been any on ours. We seem to have forgotten, or never to have learnt, the policy of placing one's enemy in the wrong. Had we observed good faith on our part, we might have told our tale to the world with a good grace; but complaints ill become those, who are found to be the first aggressors.

I am fully of opinion that those, who lean to a monarchical government, have either not consulted the public mind, or that they live in a region, which (the levelling principles in which they were bred being entirely eradicated) is much more productive of monarchical ideas, than is the case in the southern States, where, from the habitual distinctions which have always existed among the people, one would have expected the first generation and the most rapid growth of them. I am also clear, that, even admitting the utility, nay, necessity of the form, the period is not arrived for adopting

---

have been appointed by the several States, be held at Philadelphia, for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation, and reporting to Congress and the several legislatures such alterations and provisions therein, as shall, when agreed to in Congress and confirmed by the States, render the federal constitution adequate to the exigencies of government and the preservation of the Union." — *Journals, February 21st.*

The letter from Mr. Madison, written on the same day, contains some interesting particulars, as to the state of opinions on this subject.

"Congress have been much divided and embarrassed on the question, whether their taking an interest in the measure would impede or promote it. On one side it has been urged, that some of the backward States have scruples against acceding to it without some constitutional sanction; on the other, that other States will consider any interference of Congress as proceeding from the same views, which have hitherto excited their jealousies. A vote of the legislature here, entered into yesterday, will give some relief in the case. They have instructed their delegates in Congress to move for the recommendation in question. The

the change without shaking the peace of this country to its foundation. That a thorough reform of the present system is indispensable, no one, who has a capacity to judge, will deny; and with hand and heart I hope the business will be essayed in a full convention. After which, if more powers and more decision are not found in the existing form, if it still wants energy and that secrecy and despatch (either from the non-attendance or the local views of its members), which are characteristic of good government, and if it shall be found, (the contrary of which, however, I have always been more afraid of than of the abuse of them,) that Congress will, upon all proper occasions, exert the powers which are given, with a firm and steady hand, instead of frittering them back to the States, where the members, in place of viewing themselves in their national character, are too apt to be looking, — I say, after this essay is made, if the system proves inefficient, conviction of the necessity of a change will be disseminated among all classes of the people. Then, and not till then, in my opinion, can it be attempted without involving all the evils of civil discord.

---

vote was carried by a majority of one only in the Senate, and there is room to suspect, that the minority were actuated by a dislike to the substance, rather than by any objections against the form of the business. A large majority in the other branch a few days ago put a definitive *veto* on the impost. It would seem as if the politics of this State are directed by individual interests and plans, which might be incommoded by the control of an efficient federal government. The four States north of it are still to make their decision on the subject of the convention. I am told by one of the Massachusetts delegates, that the legislature of that State, which is now sitting, will certainly accede and appoint deputies, if Congress declare their approbation of the measure. I have similar information, that Connecticut will probably come in, though it is said that the interference of Congress will rather have a contrary tendency there. It is expected that South Carolina will not fail to adopt the plan, and that Georgia is equally well disposed. All the intermediate States between the former and New York have already appointed deputies, except Maryland, which it is said means to do it, and has entered into some vote which declares as much."— *New York, February 21st.*

I confess, however, that my opinion of public virtue is so far changed, that I have my doubts whether any system, without the means of coercion in the sovereign, will enforce due obedience to the ordinances of a general government; without which every thing else fails. Laws or ordinances unobserved, or partially attended to, had better never have been made; because the first is a mere nullity, and the second is productive of much jealousy and discontent. But what kind of coercion, you may ask. This indeed will require thought, though the non-compliance of the States with the late requisition is an evidence of the necessity. It is somewhat singular that a State (New York), which used to be foremost in all federal measures, should now turn her face against them in almost every instance.*

I fear the State of Massachusetts has exceeded the bounds of good policy in its disfranchisements. Punishment is certainly due to the disturbers of a government, but the operation of this act is too extensive. It embraces too much, and probably will give birth to new instead of destroying the old leaven. Some acts passed at the last session of our Assembly, respecting the trade of this country, have given great and general discontent to the merchants. An application from the whole body of them at Norfolk has been made to the governor, it is said, to convene the Assembly.

I had written thus far, and was on the point of telling you how much I am your obliged servant, when your favor of the 18th ultimo calls upon me for additional acknowledgments. I thank you for the Indian vocabulary, which I dare say will be very acceptable in a

* That General Washington's thoughts had been deeply occupied on the best plan of reforming the confederation, and the principles upon which it might be firmly established, is obvious from a paper contained in the APPENDIX, No. IV.

general comparison. Having taken a copy, I return you the original with thanks.

It gives me great pleasure to hear, that there is a probability of a full representation of the States in convention; but if the delegates come to it under fetters, the salutary ends proposed will be greatly embarrassed and retarded, if not altogether defeated. I am desirous of knowing how this matter is, as my wish is that the convention may adopt no temporizing expedients, but probe the defects of the constitution to the bottom, and provide a radical cure, whether they are agreed to or not. A conduct of this kind will stamp wisdom and dignity on their proceedings, and hold up a light which sooner or later will have its influence.

I should feel pleasure, I confess, in hearing that Vermont is received into the Union upon terms agreeable to all parties. I took the liberty years ago to tell some of the first characters in the State of New York, that sooner or later it would come to this; that the longer it was delayed, the terms on their part would probably be more difficult; and that the general interest was suffering by the suspense in which the business was held, as the asylum which it afforded was a constant drain from the army, in place of the aid which it would have afforded; and lastly, considering the situation of their country, if they were not with us, they might become a thorn in our side, which I verily believe would have been the case if the war had continued. The western settlements, without good and wise management, may be equally troublesome.

With sentiments of sincere friendship,

I am, dear Sir,

yours, &c.

TO HENRY KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 2 April, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

The early attention, which you were so obliging as to pay to my letter of the 8th ultimo, is highly pleasing and flattering. Were you to continue to give me information on the same point, you would add to the favor; as I see or think I see reasons for and against my attendance in convention so near an equilibrium, as will cause me to determine upon either with diffidence. One of the reasons against it is a fear, that all the States will not be represented. As some of them appear to have been unwillingly drawn into the measure, their delegates will come with such fetters as will embarrass and perhaps render nugatory the whole proceeding. In either of these circumstances, that is, a partial representation or cramped powers, I should not like to be a sharer in the business. If the delegates assemble with such powers, as will enable the convention to probe the defects of the constitution to the bottom, and point out radical cures, it would be an honorable employment; but not otherwise. These are matters you may possibly come at by means of your acquaintance with the delegates in Congress, who undoubtedly know what powers are given by their respective States. You also can inform me what is the prevailing opinion, with respect to my attendance or non-attendance; and I would sincerely thank you for the confidential communication of it.

If I should attend the convention, I will be in Philadelphia previous to the meeting of the Cincinnati, where I shall hope and expect to meet you and some others of my particular friends the day before, in order that I may have a free and unreserved conference with

you on the subject of it; for, I assure you, this is in my estimation a business of a delicate nature.

That the design of the institution was pure, I have not a particle of doubt; that it may be so still, is perhaps equally unquestionable. But is not the subsiding of the jealousies respecting it to be ascribed to the modifications, which took place at the last general meeting? Are not these rejected *in toto* by some of the State Societies, and partially acceded to by others? Has any State so far overcome its prejudices as to grant a charter? Will the modifications and alterations be insisted on in the next meeting, or given up? If the former, will it not occasion warmth and divisions? If the latter, and I should remain at the head of this order, in what light would my signature appear in recommendations having different tendencies? In what light will this versatility appear to the foreign members, who perhaps are acting agreeably to the recommendation?

These, and other matters which may be agitated, will, I fear, place me in a disagreeable situation, if I should attend the meeting; and were among the causes, which induced me to decline previously the honor of the presidency. Indeed my health is become very precarious. This, however smooth and agreeable other matters might be, might, almost in the moment of my departure, prevent my attendance on either occasion. I will not at present touch upon any other points of your letter, but wish you to ponder on all these matters, and write to me as soon as you can.

With sentiments of the sincerest friendship, I am your most affectionate, &c.

TO EDMUND RANDOLPH, GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA.

Mount Vernon, 9 April, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

In reply to your favor of the 2d instant, I have to request, that you will not be at the trouble of forwarding any money to me from the treasury. If I should attend the service, it will suit me as well to receive it from you in Philadelphia, as at this place. If I should not, I shall have no business with it at all.

It gives me pleasure to find by your letter, that there will be so full a representation from this State. If the case had been otherwise, I would in emphatical terms have urged again that, rather than depend upon my going, another might be chosen in my place; for, as a friend and in confidence, I declare to you, that my assent is given contrary to my judgment; because the act will, I apprehend, be considered as inconsistent with my public declaration, delivered in a solemn manner at an interesting era of my life, never more to intermeddle in public matters. This declaration not only stands on the files of Congress, but is I believe registered in almost all the gazettes and magazines that are published; and what adds to the embarrassment is, I had, previously to my appointment, informed by a circular letter the several State Societies of the Cincinnati of my intention to decline the presidency of that order, and excused myself from attending the next general meeting at Philadelphia on the first Monday in May; assigning reasons for so doing, which apply as well in the one case as in the other. Add to these, I very much fear that all the States will not appear in convention, and that some of them will come fettered so as to impede rather than accelerate the great object of their convening; which, under the peculiar circumstances of

my case, would place me in a more disagreeable situation than any other member would stand in. As I have yielded, however, to what appeared to be the earnest wishes of my friends, I will hope for the best, and can assure you of the sincere and affectionate regard with which I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.*

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Philadelphia, 30 May, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

It has so happened, that the letter, which you did me the honor of writing to me the 14th of November last, did not come to my hands till the first of the present month, and at a time when I was about to set off for the convention of the States, appointed to be held in this city the 14th instant. Consequently it has not been in my power at an earlier period to reply to the important matters, which are the subjects of it.†

I come now to the other part of your letter, which concerns the Cincinnati, on which indeed I scarcely

---

* Having at last determined to attend the convention, he was preparing to leave home at an early day, that he might be present at the meeting of the Cincinnati; but, on the 26th of April, he received intelligence by an express, that his mother and sister were dangerously ill at Fredericksburg. He set off the next morning to visit them, and this sudden call prevented his journey to Philadelphia in time to meet the Cincinnati. As the illness of his mother and sister, however, took a more favorable turn than had been expected, he was detained in Fredericksburg but three days, and then returned home. He was thus enabled to make such seasonable preparations for his departure, that he arrived in Philadelphia on the 13th of May, being the day preceding that appointed for the opening of the Convention. See APPENDIX, No. V.

† A large part of the letter is here omitted, which contains remarks on the navigation of the interior waters of Virginia, and on a project of the house of Le Coulteaux in Paris for establishing a fur company in the United States. See JEFFERSON'S *Writings*, Vol. III. p. 62.

know what to say. It is a delicate, it is a perplexing subject. Not having the extract from the *Encyclopédie* before me, I cannot now undertake to enter into the merits of the publication.* It may therefore be as much as will be expected from me to observe, that the author appears in general to have detailed very candidly and ingenuously the motives and inducements, which gave birth to the Society. Some of the subsequent facts, which I cannot, however, from memory pretend to discuss with precision, are thought by gentlemen, who have seen the publication, to be misstated; insomuch that it is commonly said, truth and falsehood are so intimately blended, that it will become very difficult to sever them.

For myself, I only recollect two or three circumstances, in the narration of which palpable mistakes seem to have insinuated themselves. Monsieur L'Enfant did not arrive and bring the eagles during the session of the general meeting, but some time before that convention. The legislature of Rhode Island never passed any act whatever on the subject, that ever came to my knowledge, notwithstanding what Mirabeau and others had previously advanced. Nothing can be more ridiculous than the supposition of the author, that the Society was instituted partly because the country could not then pay the army, except the assertion that the United States have now made full and competent provision for paying, not only the arrearages due to the officers, but the half-pay or commutation at their option; whence the author deduces an argument for its dissolution. Though I conceive this never had any thing to do with the institution, yet the officers in most of the States, who never have received nor I believe

* Mr. Jefferson had sent an extract from an article in the *Encyclopédie*, being an account of the Society of the Cincinnati.

expect to receive one farthing of the principal or interest on their final settlement securities, would be much obliged to the author to convince them how and when they received a compensation for their services. No foreigner, or American, who has been absent some time, will easily comprehend how tender those concerned are on this point. I am sorry to say, a great many of the officers consider me as having in a degree committed myself by inducing them to trust too much in the justice of their country. They heartily wish no settlement had been made, because it has rendered them obnoxious to their fellow citizens, without affording them the least emolument.

For the reason I first mentioned, I cannot think it expedient for me to go into an investigation of the writer's deductions. I shall accordingly content myself with giving you some idea of the part I have acted, posterior to the first formation of the association.

When I found that you and many of the most respectable characters in the country would entirely acquiesce in the institution, as altered and amended in the first general meeting of 1784, and that the objections against the hereditary and other obnoxious parts were wholly done away, I was prevailed upon to accept the presidency. Happy in finding, so far as I could learn by assiduous inquiry, that all the clamors and jealousies, which had been excited against the original association, had ceased, I judged it a proper time in the last autumn to withdraw myself from any farther agency in the business, and to make my retirement complete, agreeably to my original plan. I wrote circular letters to all the State Societies announcing my wishes, informing them that I did not propose to be at the general meeting, and requested not to be reëlected president. This was the last step of a pub-

lic nature I expected ever to take. But, having since been appointed by my native State to attend the national convention, and having been pressed to a compliance in a manner, which it hardly becomes me to describe, I have, in a measure, been obliged to sacrifice my own sentiments, and to be present in Philadelphia at the very time of the general meeting of the Cincinnati. After which I was not at liberty to decline the presidency, without placing myself in an extremely disagreeable situation with relation to that brave and faithful class of men, whose persevering patriotism and friendship I had experienced on so many trying occasions.

The business of this convention is as yet too much in embryo to form any opinion of the conclusion. Much is expected from it by some; not much by others; and nothing by a few. That something is necessary, none will deny; for the general government, if it can be called a government, is shaken to its foundation, and liable to be overturned by every blast. In a word, it is at an end; and, unless a remedy is soon applied, anarchy and confusion will inevitably ensue. Having greatly exceeded the bounds of a letter, I will only add assurances of that esteem, regard, and respect, with which I have the honor to be, &c.

TO DAVID STUART.

Philadelphia, 1 July, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I have been favored with your letter of the 17th ultimo. As the rules of the convention prevent me from relating any of the proceedings, and the gazettes contain, more fully than I could detail, other occurrences

of a public nature, I have little to communicate to you in the article of news. Happy indeed will it be, if the convention shall be able to recommend such a firm and permanent government for this Union, that all who live under it may be secure in their lives, liberty, and property; and thrice happy would it be, if such a recommendation should obtain. Every body wishes, every body expects something from the convention; but what will be the final result of its deliberation, the book of fate must disclose. Persuaded I am, that the primary cause of all our disorders lies in the different State governments, and in the tenacity of that power, which pervades the whole of their systems. Whilst independent sovereignty is so ardently contended for, whilst the local views of each State, and separate interests, by which they are too much governed, will not yield to a more enlarged scale of politics, incompatibility in the laws of different States, and disrespect to those of the general government, must render the situation of this great country weak, inefficient, and disgraceful. It has already done so, almost to the final dissolution of it. Weak at home and disregarded abroad is our present condition, and contemptible enough it is.

Entirely unnecessary was it to offer any apology for the sentiments you were so obliging as to offer me. I have had no wish more ardent, through the whole progress of this business, than that of knowing what kind of government is best calculated for us to live under. No doubt there will be a diversity of sentiments on this important subject; and, to inform the judgment, it is necessary to hear all arguments that can be advanced. To please all is impossible, and to attempt it would be vain. The only way, therefore, is, under all the views in which it can be placed, and with a due consideration of circumstances and habits, to form

such a government as will bear the scrutinizing eye of criticism, and trust it to the good sense and patriotism of the people to carry it into effect. Demagogues, men who are unwilling to lose any of their State consequence, and interested characters in each, will oppose any general government. But let these be regarded rightly, and justice, it is to be hoped, will at length prevail. I am, &c.

TO HECTOR ST. JOHN DE CRÈVECŒUR.*

Philadelphia, 9 July, 1787.

SIR,

The letter you did me the honor of writing to me by Commodore Paul Jones came safe; as did the volumes of the *Farmer's Letters*. For both, particularly for the compliment of the letter, I pray you to accept my best thanks. Let me express my gratitude to you, at the same time, Sir, for the obliging offer of transmitting any communications I may have occasion to make, to my good and much esteemed friend the Marquis de Lafayette, whose zeal and services in the cause of this country merit as much applause from his fellow citizens, as they meet admiration from the rest of man-

---

* Author of *Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain*. The work was first published in English in 1782, under the title of *Letters from an American Farmer*. It was enlarged in the French editions. "Hector St. John de Crèvecœur was a native of Normandy, who went to the British colonies at the age of sixteen, and became a naturalized American. Having established himself on a farm near the frontiers of the colonies, he became one of the first victims of the war of independence, the Indian allies of Great Britain setting fire to and destroying his estate. He wrote his Letters during the different epochs of the American war in English. Returning afterwards to France, he translated them into French, in which language they were printed in 1784 and 1787." — RICH'S *Bibliotheca Americana Nova*, p. 302.

kind. I congratulate you on your safe arrival in this country, and with sentiments of great esteem,

I have the honor to be, &c.

TO ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

Philadelphia, 10 July, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I thank you for your communication of the 3d instant. When I refer you to the state of the counsels, which prevailed at the period you left this city, and add that they are now if possible in a worse train than ever, you will find but little ground on which the hope of a good establishment can be formed. In a word, I almost despair of seeing a favorable issue to the proceedings of our convention, and do therefore repent having had any agency in the business.

The men, who oppose a strong and energetic government, are in my opinion narrow-minded politicians, or are under the influence of local views. The apprehension expressed by them, that the people will not accede to the form proposed, is the ostensible, not the real cause of opposition. But, admitting that the present sentiment is as they prognosticate, the proper question ought nevertheless to be, Is it, or is it not, the best form that such a country as this can adopt? If it be the best, recommend it, and it will assuredly obtain, maugre opposition. I am sorry you went away. I wish you were back. The crisis is equally important and alarming, and no opposition, under such circumstances, should discourage exertions till the signature is offered. I will not at this time trouble you with more than my best wishes and sincere regard.

I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO RICHARD HENRY LEE.

Philadelphia, 19 July, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I have had the honor to receive your favor of the 15th instant, and thank you for the ordinance which was enclosed in it. My sentiments, with respect to the navigation of the Mississippi, have been long fixed, and are not dissimilar to those, which are expressed in your letter. I have ever been of opinion, that the true policy of the Atlantic States, instead of contending prematurely for the free navigation of that river (which eventually, and perhaps as soon as it will be our true interest to obtain it, must happen), would be to open and improve the natural communications with the western country, through which the produce of it might be transported with convenience and ease to our markets. Till you get low down the Ohio, I conceive, that, considering the length of the voyage to New Orleans, the difficulty of the current, and the time necessary to perform it in, it would be the interest of the inhabitants to bring their produce to our ports; and sure I am, there is no other tie by which they will long form a link in the chain of federal union. I believe, however, from the temper in which those people appear to be, and from the ambitious and turbulent spirit of some of their demagogues, that it has become a moot point to determine, when every circumstance which attends this business is brought into view, what is best to be done. The State of Virginia having taken the matter up with so high a hand, is not among the least embarrassing or disagreeable parts of the difficulty.

I have the honor to be, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Philadelphia, 15 August, 1787.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

Although the business of the federal convention is not yet closed, nor I, thereby, enabled to give you an account of its proceedings, yet the opportunity afforded by Commodore Paul Jones's return to France is too favorable for me to omit informing you, that the present expectation of the members is, that it will end about the first of next month, when, or as soon after as it shall be in my power, I will communicate the result of our long deliberation to you.

Newspaper accounts inform us, that the session of the Assembly of Notables is ended; and you have had the goodness, in your letter of the 5th of May, to communicate some of the proceedings to me; among which is that of the interesting motion made by yourself, respecting the expenditure of public money by Monsieur de Calonne, and the consequence thereof.

The patriotism, by which this motion was dictated, throws a lustre on the action, which cannot fail to dignify the author; and I sincerely hope with you, that much good will result from the deliberations of so respectable a council. I am not less ardent in my wish, that you may succeed in your plan of toleration in religious matters. Being no bigot myself to any mode of worship, I am disposed to indulge the professors of Christianity in the church with that road to Heaven, which to them shall seem the most direct, plainest, easiest, and least liable to exception.

The politicians of this country hardly know what to make of the present situation of European affairs. If serious consequences do not follow the blood, which has been shed in the United Netherlands, these people

will certainly have acted differently from the rest of mankind; and, in another quarter, one would think there could hardly be so much smoke without some fire between the Russians and Turks. Should these disputes kindle the flame of war, it is not easy to prescribe bounds to its extension or effect. The disturbances in Massachusetts have subsided, but there are seeds of discontent in every part of this Union; ready to produce other disorders, if the wisdom of the present convention should not be able to devise, and the good sense of the people be found ready to adopt, a more vigorous and energetic government, than the one under which we now live; for the present, from experience, has been found too feeble and inadequate to give that security, which our liberties and property render absolutely essential, and which the fulfilment of public faith loudly requires.

Vain is it to look for respect from abroad, or tranquillity at home; vain is it to murmur at the detention of our western posts, or complain of the restriction of our commerce; vain are all the attempts to remedy the evils complained of by Mr. Dumas, to discharge the interest due on foreign loans, or satisfy the claims of foreign officers, the neglect of doing which is a high impeachment of our national character, and is hurtful to the feelings of every well-wisher to this country in and out of it; vain is it to talk of chastising the Algerines, or doing ourselves justice in any other respect, till the wisdom and force of the Union can be more concentrated and better applied. With sentiments of the highest respect, and most perfect regard for Madame de Lafayette and your family, and with the most affectionate attachment to you, I am ever yours, &c.

TO HENRY KNOX.

Philadelphia, 19 August, 1787.

My dear Sir,

By slow, I wish I could add, and sure movements, the business of the convention advances; but to say when it will end, or what will be the result, is more than I dare venture to do; and therefore I shall hazard no opinion thereon. If something good does not proceed from the session, the defects cannot with propriety be charged to the hurry with which the business has been conducted, notwithstanding which many things may be forgotten, some of them not well digested, and others, from the contrariety of sentiments with which such a body is pervaded, become a mere nullity; yet I wish a disposition may be found in Congress, the several State legislatures, and the community at large, to adopt the government, which may be agreed on in convention, because I am fully persuaded it is the best that can be obtained at the present moment under such a diversity of ideas.

I should have had great pleasure in a visit to New York during the adjournment of the convention; but, not foreseeing the period at which it would take place, or the length of it, I had previously put my carriage into the hands of a workman to repair, and was thereby deprived of the means of going. I condole very sincerely with Mrs. Knox and you on your late loss, but am sure, notwithstanding, each of you, however severe the trial, has fortitude enough to meet it. The ties of nature must have their yearnings before calm resignation will preponderate. It is unnecessary to repeat the assurances with which I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Philadelphia, 18 September, 1787.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

In the midst of hurry, and in the moment of my departure from this city, I address this letter to you. The principal, indeed the only design of it, is to fulfil the promise I made, that I would send to you the proceedings of the federal convention, as soon as the business was closed. More than this, circumstanced as I am at present, it is not in my power to do; nor am I inclined to attempt it, as the enclosure must speak for itself, and will occupy your thoughts for some time.

It is the result of four months' deliberation. It is now a child of fortune, to be fostered by some and buffeted by others. What will be the general opinion, or the reception of it, is not for me to decide; nor shall I say any thing for or against it. If it be good, I suppose it will work its way; if bad, it will recoil on the framers. My best wishes attend you and yours. With the sincerest friendship and most affectionate regard,

I am, ever, &c.

TO PATRICK HENRY.

Mount Vernon, 24 September, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

In the first moment after my return, I take the liberty of sending to you a copy of the constitution, which the federal convention has submitted to the people of these States. I accompany it with no observations. Your own judgment will at once discover the good and the exceptionable parts of it; and your experience of the difficulties, which have ever arisen when attempts

have been made to reconcile such a variety of interests and local prejudices, as pervade the several States, will render explanation unnecessary. I wish the constitution, which is offered, had been more perfect; but I sincerely believe it is the best that could be obtained at this time. And, as a constitutional door is opened for amendments hereafter, the adoption of it, under the present circumstances of the Union, is in my opinion desirable.

From a variety of concurring accounts it appears to me, that the political concerns of this country are in a manner suspended by a thread, and that the convention has been looked up to, by the reflecting part of the community, with a solicitude which is hardly to be conceived; and, if nothing had been agreed on by that body, anarchy would soon have ensued, the seeds being deeply sown in every soil. I am, &c.*

---

* A copy of the same letter was sent to Benjamin Harrison, and also to Thomas Nelson.

From Mr. Henry's Reply. — "I have to lament, that I cannot bring my mind to accord with the proposed constitution. The concern I feel on this account is really greater than I can express. Perhaps mature reflection may furnish me reasons to change my present sentiments into a conformity with the opinions of those personages, for whom I have the highest reverence." — *October 19th.*

From Mr. Harrison's Reply. — "I feel myself deeply interested in every thing that you have had a hand in, or that comes from you; and am so well assured of the solidity of your judgment, and the rectitude of your intentions, that I shall never stick at trifles to conform myself to your opinion. In the present instance I am so totally uninformed, as to the general situation of America, that I can form no judgment of the necessity the convention was under to give us such a constitution as it has done. If our condition is not very desperate, I have my fears that the remedy will prove worse than the disease. Age makes men often over cautious. I am willing to attribute my fears to that cause; but, from whatever source they spring, I cannot divest myself of an opinion, that the seeds of civil discord are plentifully sown in very many of the powers given, both to the President and Congress, and that, if the constitution is carried into effect, the States south of the Potomac will be little more than appendages to those to the northward of it. You will

TO JAMES MADISON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 10 October, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I thank you for your letter of the 30th ultimo. It came by the last post. I am better pleased, that the proceedings of the convention are submitted from Congress by a unanimous vote, feeble as it is, than if they had appeared under strong marks of approbation without it. This apparent unanimity will have its effect. Not every one has opportunities to peep behind the curtain; and, as the multitude are often deceived by externals, the appearance of unanimity in that body on this occasion will be of great importance.*

As far as accounts have been received from the southern and western counties, the sentiment with respect to the proceedings of the convention is favorable. Whether the knowledge of this, or a conviction of the impropriety of withholding the constitution from State conventions, has worked most in the breast of Colonel Mason,† I will not decide; but the fact is, he has de-

---

say that general charges are things without force. They are so; but, in the present instance, I do not withhold particular observations because I want them, but that I would not tire your patience by entering deeply into a subject, before I have heard the reasons, which operated in favor of the measures taken. After the meeting of the Assembly, and hearing from those, who had a hand in the work, the reasons that operated with them in favor of their measures, I will then more at large give you my sentiments. In the interim I shall only say, that my objections chiefly lie against the unlimited powers of taxation and the regulations of trade, and the jurisdictions that are to be established in every State altogether independent of their laws. The sword and such powers will, nay, in the nature of things they must, sooner or later establish a tyranny not inferior to the triumvirate or *centumviri* of Rome." — *Berkeley, October 4th.*

* See Mr. Madison's Letter in the APPENDIX, No. VI.

† Colonel Mason said, in a letter here referred to; "I take the liberty to enclose to you my objections to the new constitution of government, which a little moderation and temper at the latter end of the convention might have removed. I am, however, most decidedly of opinion, that

clared unequivocally, in a letter to me, for its going to the people. Had his sentiments, however, been opposed to the measure, his instructions (for the delegates of this county are so instructed) would compel him to vote for it. Yet I have no doubt, that his assent will be accompanied by the most tremendous apprehensions, which the highest coloring can give to his objections. To alarm the people seems to be the groundwork of his plan. The want of a qualified navigation act is already declared to be a means by which the price of produce in the southern States will be reduced to nothing, and will become a monopoly of the eastern and northern States. To enumerate the whole of his objections is unnecessary, because they are detailed in the address of the seceding members of the Assembly of Pennsylvania, which no doubt you have seen.

I scarcely think any powerful opposition will be made to the constitution's being submitted to a convention of this State. If it is given, I hope you will make it convenient to be present. Explanations will be wanting, and none can give them with more accuracy and propriety than yourself. The sentiments of Mr. Henry, with respect to the constitution, are not known in these parts. Mr. Joseph Jones, who was in Alexandria before the convention broke up, was of opinion, that they would not be inimical to the proceedings of it. Others think, as the advocate of a paper emission, he cannot be friendly to them.

From circumstances, which have been related, it is

---

it ought to be submitted to the people for that special purpose; and, should any attempt be made to prevent the calling of such a convention here, such a measure shall have every opposition in my power to give it. You will readily observe, that my objections are not numerous (the greater part of the enclosed paper containing reasonings upon the probable effects of the exceptionable parts), though in my mind some of them are capital ones." — *October 7th.*

conjectured that the Governor wishes he had been among the subscribing members; but time will disclose more than we know at present, with respect to the whole of the business, and, when I hear more, I will write to you again. In the mean while I pray you to be assured of the sincere regard and affection with which I am, my dear Sir, &c.

P. S. Having received, in a letter from Colonel Mason, a detail of his objections to the proposed constitution, I enclose to you a copy of them.*

TO HENRY KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 15 October, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 3d instant came duly to hand. The fourth day after leaving Philadelphia I reached home, and found Mrs. Washington and the family tolerably well, but the fruits of the earth almost entirely destroyed by one of the severest droughts in this neighbourhood, that has ever been experienced. The crops pretty generally have been injured in this State below the mountains, but not to the degree that mine, and some others in a small circle around me, have suffered.

The constitution is now before the judgment-seat. It has, as was expected, its adversaries and supporters. Which will prevail, is yet to be decided. The former more than probably will be most active, as the major part of them will, it is to be feared, be governed by sinister and self-important motives, to which every thing in their breasts must yield. The opposition from

* These objections and Mr. Madison's reply to them are contained in the APPENDIX, No. VI.

another class of them may perhaps, if they should be men of reflection, candor, and information, subside in the solution of the following simple questions. Is the constitution, which is submitted by the convention, preferable to the government, if it can be called one, under which we now live? Is it probable that more confidence would at this time be placed in another convention, provided the experiment should be tried, than was placed in the last, and is it likely that a better agreement would take place? What would be the consequences if these should not happen, or even from the delay, which must inevitably follow such an experiment? Is there not a constitutional door open for alterations or amendments? Is it not likely that real defects will be as readily discovered after as before trial? Will not our successors be as ready to apply the remedy as ourselves, if occasion should require it? To think otherwise will, in my judgment, be ascribing more of the *amor patriæ*, more wisdom and more virtue to ourselves, than I think we deserve.

It is highly probable, that the refusal of our Governor and Colonel Mason to subscribe to the proceedings of the convention will have a bad effect in this State; for, as you well observe, they must not only assign reasons for the justification of their own conduct, but it is highly probable that these reasons will be clothed in most terrific array for the purpose of alarming.* Some

* Governor Randolph and Colonel Mason of Virginia, and Mr. Gerry of Massachusetts, although they were members of the convention and joined in all its proceedings, declined putting their names to the constitution, on account of certain articles contained in it, which they could not approve. Governor Randolph communicated his views on the subject in a letter to the Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates, which was published. *American Museum*, Vol. III. p. 62. The objections of Mr. Gerry to the constitution, and various particulars relating to them, may be seen in AUSTIN'S *Life of Gerry*, Vol. II. pp. 38–97. Mr. Justice

things are already addressed to the fears of the people, and will no doubt have their effect. As far, however, as the sense of this part of the country has been taken, it is strongly in favor of the proposed constitution. Further I cannot speak with precision. If a powerful opposition is given to it, the weight thereof will, I apprehend, come from the south side of James River, and from the western counties. I am, &c.

TO DAVID STUART.

Mount Vernon, 17 October, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

As the enclosed *Advertiser* contains a speech of Mr. Wilson's, as able, candid, and honest a member as was in the convention, which will place the most of Colonel Mason's objections in their true point of light, I send it to you. The republication of it, if you can get it done, will be serviceable at this juncture. His *ipso facto* objection does not, I believe, require any answer. Every mind must recoil at the idea. And, with respect to the navigation act, I am mistaken if any men, bodies of men, or countries, will enter into any compact or treaty, if one of the three is to have a negative control over the other two.* But, granting that it is an evil, it will infallibly work its own cure. There must be reciprocity, or no union. Which of the two is preferable, will not become a question in the mind of any true patriot. Sincerely and affectionately I am yours.

Story, in his chapter on the "Objections to the Constitution," has treated the whole subject in a full and comprehensive manner. STORY'S *Commentaries*, Vol. I. p. 259.

* See Mr. Mason's *Objections* in the APPENDIX, No. VI.

TO ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

Mount Vernon, 18 October, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

Your favor without date came to my hand by the last post. It is with unfeigned concern I perceive a political dispute has arisen between Governor Clinton and yourself. For both of you I have the highest esteem and regard. But, as you say it is insinuated by some of your political adversaries, and may obtain credit, "that you *palmed* yourself upon me, and were *dismissed* from my family," and call upon me to do you justice by a recital of the facts, I do therefore explicitly declare, that both charges are entirely unfounded. With respect to the first, I have no cause to believe, that you took a single step to accomplish, or had the most distant idea of receiving, an appointment in my family till you were invited into it; and, with respect to the second, your quitting it was altogether the effect of your own choice.

When the situation of this country calls loudly for vigor and unanimity, it is to be lamented that gentlemen of talents and character should disagree in their sentiments for promoting the public weal; but unfortunately this ever has been, and most probably ever will be, the case in the affairs of mankind.

Having scarcely been from home since my return from Philadelphia, I can give little information with respect to the general reception of the new constitution in this State. In Alexandria, however, and some of the adjacent counties, it was embraced with an enthusiastic warmth, of which I had no conception. I expect, notwithstanding, violent opposition will be given to it by some characters of weight and influence in the State. Mrs. Washington unites with me in best wishes to Mrs. Hamilton and yourself. I am, &c.

TO JAMES MADISON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 22 October, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

When I wrote to you last, I was possessed of very little information of the sentiments of this State on the new constitution beyond the circle of Alexandria. Since, by the last post, I have received a letter from a member of the Assembly in Richmond, containing the following paragraphs.

"I believe such an instance has not happened before since the revolution, that there should be a House on the first day of the session, and business immediately taken up. This was not only the case on Monday, but there was a full House when Mr. Prentiss was called up to the chair as speaker, there being no opposition. Thus the session has commenced peaceably.

"It gives me much pleasure to inform you, that the sentiments of the members are infinitely more favorable to the constitution, than the most zealous advocates for it could have expected. I have not met with one in all my inquiries (and I have made them with great diligence) opposed to it, except Mr. Henry, who I have heard is so, but could only conjecture it from a conversation with him on the subject. Other members, who have also been active in their inquiries, tell me that they have met with none opposed to it. It is said, however, that old Mr. Cabell of Amherst disapproves of it. Mr. Nicholas has declared himself a warm friend to it. The transmissory note of Congress was before us to-day, when Mr. Henry declared, that it transcended our powers to decide on the constitution, and that it must go before a convention. As it was insinuated he would aim at preventing this, much pleasure was discovered at the declaration.

"Thursday next is fixed upon for taking up the question of calling the convention, and fixing the time of its meeting. In the mean time five thousand copies are ordered to be printed, to be dispersed by the members in their respective counties for the information of the people. I cannot forbear mentioning, that the Chancellor Pendleton espouses the constitution so warmly, as to declare he will give it his aid in a convention if his health will permit. As there are few better judges of such subjects, this must be deemed a fortunate circumstance."

As the above quotation is the sum of my information, I shall add nothing more on the subject of the proposed government at this time.

Mr. C. P—— is unwilling, I perceive by the enclosures contained in your favor of the 13th, to lose any fame that can be acquired by the publication of his sentiments. If the subject of the navigation of the Mississippi could have remained as silent, and glided as gently down the stream of time for a while, as the waters do that are contained within the banks, it would, I confess, have comported more with my ideas of sound policy, than any decision that can be made at this day. With sentiments the most affectionate and friendly, I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO DAVID STUART.

Mount Vernon, 5 November, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I thank you for the communications in your letters of the 15th and 26th ultimo, both of which came safely. It gives me pleasure to hear, that the Assembly have sent the constitution to a convention by a unanimous

vote, unstamped with any mark of disapprobation. If Mr. Charles Lee, however, has been able to form a just opinion of the sentiments of the country, it is, that the major voice is opposed to it, particularly in the southern and western parts of the States. Is this your opinion, from the observations you have made, or from the information you have received? Maryland, though the Assembly has not yet met from whence any thing can be drawn, is, we are told, exceedingly well disposed to its adoption; nay, further, that Mr. Chase has become a convert to it. The accounts from the States eastward and northward speak the same language, though the papers teem with declamation against it by a few. A paper in favor of it, written I am informed either by or under the auspices of Mr. Wilson in numbers, I herewith send you. With respect to British debts, I would fain hope, let the eloquence or abilities of any man or set of men be what they may, that the good sense and justice of this State will never suffer a violation of the treaty, or pass acts of injustice to individuals. Honesty in States, as well as individuals, will ever be found the soundest policy. With very great esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

Mount Vernon, 10 November, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I thank you for the pamphlet and gazette contained in your letter of the 30th ultimo. For the remaining numbers of PUBLIUS I shall acknowledge myself obliged, as I am persuaded the subject will be well handled by the author of them.

The new constitution has, as the public prints will

have informed you, been sent to the people of this State by a unanimous vote of the Assembly; but it is not to be inferred from hence, that its opponents are silenced. On the contrary, there are many, and some powerful ones; some of whom, it is said, by overshooting the mark, have lessened their weight. Be this as it may, their assiduity stands unrivalled, whilst the friends to the constitution content themselves with barely avowing their approbation of it. Thus stands the matter at present in this State. I think nevertheless the voice is for it.

Application has been made to me by Mr. Secretary Thomson (by order of Congress) for the copy of a report of a committee, which was appointed to confer with Baron Steuben on his first arrival in this country, forwarded to me by Mr. President Laurens. This I have accordingly sent. It throws no other light on the subject, than such as is derived from the disinterested conduct of the Baron. No terms are made by him, "nor will he accept of any thing but with general approbation." I have, however, in my letter enclosing this report to the Secretary, taken occasion to express an unequivocal wish, that Congress would reward the Baron for services, sacrifices, and merits, to his entire satisfaction. It is the only way in which I could bring my sentiments before that honorable body, as it has been an established rule with me to ask nothing from it. With very great esteem and regard, I am, dear Sir, &c.*

* Respecting the terms on which Baron Steuben engaged in the American service, see Vol. V. p. 526.

TO BUSHROD WASHINGTON.

Mount Vernon, 10 November, 1787.

DEAR BUSHROD,

In due course of post your letters of the 19th and 26th ultimo came to hand, and I thank you for the communications. That the Assembly would afford the people an opportunity of deciding on the proposed constitution, I had scarcely a doubt. The only question with me was, whether it would go forth under favorable auspices, or receive the stamp of disapprobation. The opponents I expected (for it ever has been, that the adversaries to a measure are more active than its friends,) would endeavour to stamp it with unfavorable impressions, in order to bias the judgment, that is ultimately to decide on it. This is evidently the case with the writers in opposition, whose objections are better calculated to alarm the fears, than to convince the judgment, of their readers. They build their objections upon principles, that do not exist, which the constitution does not support them in, and the existence of which has been, by an appeal to the constitution itself, flatly denied; and then, as if they were unanswerable, draw all the dreadful consequences that are necessary to alarm the apprehensions of the ignorant or unthinking. It is not the interest of the major part of those characters to be convinced; nor will their local views yield to arguments, which do not accord with their present or future prospects.

A candid solution of a single question, to which the plainest understanding is competent, does, in my opinion, decide the dispute; namely, Is it best for the States to unite? If there are men, who prefer the negative, then unquestionably the constitution which is offered must, in their estimation, be wrong from the

words, "*We the people*," to the signature, inclusively; but those, who think differently, and yet object to parts of it, would do well to consider, that it does not lie with any one State, or the minority of the States, to superstruct a constitution for the whole. The separate interests, as far as it is practicable, must be consolidated; and local views must be attended to, as far as the nature of the case will admit. Hence it is, that every State has some objection to the present form, and these objections are directed to different points. That which is most pleasing to one is obnoxious to another, and so *vice versâ*. If then the union of the whole is a desirable object, the component parts must yield a little in order to accomplish it. Without the latter, the former is unattainable; for again I repeat it, that not a single State, nor the minority of the States, can force a constitution on the majority. But, admitting the power, it will surely be granted, that it cannot be done without involving scenes of civil commotion, of a very serious nature.

Let the opponents of the proposed constitution in this State be asked, and it is a question they certainly ought to have asked themselves, what line of conduct they would advise it to adopt, if nine other States, of which I think there is little doubt, should accede to the constitution. Would they recommend, that it should stand single? Will they connect it with Rhode Island? Or even with two others checker-wise, and remain with them, as outcasts from the society, to shift for themselves? Or will they return to their dependence on Great Britain? Or, lastly, have the mortification to come in when they will be allowed no credit for doing so?

The warmest friends and the best supporters the constitution has, do not contend that it is free from

imperfections; but they found these unavoidable, and are sensible, if evil is likely to arise therefrom, the remedy must come hereafter. In the present moment it is not to be obtained; and, as there is a constitutional door open for it, I think the people (for it is with them to judge), as they will have the advantage of experience on their side, can decide with as much propriety as ourselves on the alterations and amendments which are necessary. I do not think we are more inspired, have more wisdom, or possess more virtue, than those who will come after us.

The power under the constitution will always be in the people. It is intrusted for certain defined purposes, and for a certain limited period, to representatives of their own choosing; and, whenever it is exercised contrary to their interest, or not agreeably to their wishes, their servants can and undoubtedly will be recalled. It is agreed on all hands, that no government can be well administered without powers; yet, the instant these are delegated, although those, who are intrusted with the administration, are no more than the creatures of the people, act as it were but for a day, and are amenable for every false step they take, they are, from the moment they receive it, set down as tyrants. One would conceive from this, that their natures are immediately changed, and that they can have no other disposition but to oppress. Of these things, in a government constituted and guarded as ours is, I have no idea; and do firmly believe, that, whilst many ostensible reasons are assigned to prevent the adoption of it, the real ones are concealed behind the curtain, because they are not of a nature to appear in open day. I believe further, supposing them pure, that evils as great result from too great jealousy as from the want of it. We need look, I think, no further for proof of

this, than to the constitution of some, if not all, of these States. No man is a warmer advocate for proper restraints and wholesome checks in every department of government, than I am; but I have never yet been able to discover the propriety of placing it absolutely out of the power of men to render essential services, because a possibility remains of their doing ill.

If Mr. Ronald can place the finances of this country upon so respectable a footing as he has intimated, he will deserve much of its thanks. In the attempt, my best wishes will accompany him; I have nothing more to offer. I hope there remains virtue enough in the Assembly of this State to preserve inviolate public treaties and private contracts. If these are infringed, farewell to respectability and safety in the government.

If any doubt had existed in my breast, reiterated proofs would have convinced me of the impolicy of all commutable taxes. If we cannot learn wisdom from experience, it is hard to say where it is to be found. But why talk of learning it? These things are mere jobs, by which a few are enriched at the public expense; for, whether premeditation or ignorance is the cause of their destructive scheme, it ends in oppression.

You have, I find, broken the ice. The only advice I will offer to you on the occasion, if you have a mind to command the attention of the House, is to speak seldom, but to important subjects, except such as particularly relate to your constituents; and, in the former case, make yourself perfectly master of the subject. Never exceed a decent warmth, and submit your sentiments with diffidence. A dictatorial style, though it may carry conviction, is always accompanied with disgust. I am, &c.

TO SAMUEL VAUGHAN.

Mount Vernon, 12 November, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

The letter without date, with which you were pleased to honor me, accompanied by a plan of this seat, came to my hands by the last post. For both I pray you to accept my hearty and sincere thanks. The plan describes with accuracy the houses, walks, and shrubs, except in the front of the lawn, west of the court-yard. There the plan differs from the original. In the former you have closed the prospect with trees along the walk to the gate; whereas in the latter the trees terminate with two mounds of earth, one on each side, on which grow weeping willows, leaving an open and full view of the distant woods. The mounds are sixty yards apart. I mention this, because it is the only departure from the original.

Although I can have little doubt of the pleasure you must feel at the prospect of being soon reunited to your lady and family in England, I do not scruple to confess, that I shall be among those, who will view your departure from this country with regret. At the same time I beg leave to add, that I shall reflect with pleasure on the friendship with which you have honored me. The testimonies you have left of this, could my mind be so ungrateful as to forget it, would be constant remembrancers. For your kind offer of services in England I shall feel myself ever obliged, and, should occasion require it, I shall avail myself of your kindness.

I am sorry it was not in my power to take you by the hand the day I left Philadelphia. I called once; and, as you were not within, I did not leave my name, intending to call again, but circumstances prevented it.

I requested Mr. Gouverneur Morris to offer you my apology and best wishes. Should your son, who is lately arrived from England, be prompted by business or inclination to travel into this State, it would give me much pleasure to show him every civility in my power. The same to any branch of your family, or any of your friends. In wishing you, whenever it shall be undertaken, a pleasant and prosperous voyage, and a happy meeting with Mrs. Vaughan and the other parts of your family and friends in England, I am, with great cordiality and sincerity, joined by Mrs. Washington, the Major, and Fanny; and, with sentiments of the most perfect esteem and regard, I am dear Sir, &c.

TO MRS. CATHARINE MACAULAY GRAHAM.

Mount Vernon, 16 November, 1787.

MADAM,

Your favor of the 10th of October, 1786, came duly to hand, and should have had a much earlier acknowledgment, had not the business of the public, in which I have been in a manner compelled again to engage, engrossed the whole of my time for several months past, and my own private affairs required my unremitted attention since my return home.

Mr. Pine's historical painting does not appear to go on very rapidly. He informed me, when I was in Philadelphia, that he had been collecting materials to enable him to proceed with it, but that it must be a work of time to accomplish it.

You will undoubtedly, before you receive this, have an opportunity of seeing the plan of government proposed by the convention for the United States. You will very readily conceive, Madam, the difficulties, which

the convention had to struggle against. The various and opposite interests which were to be conciliated, the local prejudices which were to be subdued, the diversity of opinions and sentiments which were to be reconciled, and, in fine, the sacrifices which were necessary to be made on all sides for the general welfare, combined to make it a work of so intricate and difficult a nature, that I think it is much to be wondered at, that any thing could have been produced with such unanimity as the constitution proposed. It is now submitted to the consideration of the people, and waits their decision. The legislatures of the States, which have been convened since the constitution was offered, have readily agreed to the calling of conventions in their respective States; some by a unanimous vote, and others by a large majority. But whether it will be adopted by the people, or not, remains yet to be determined. I have the honor to be, Madam, &c.

TO DAVID STUART.

Mount Vernon, 30 November, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 14th came duly to hand. I am sorry to find by it, that the opposition gains strength. I do not wonder much at this. The adversaries of a measure are generally, if not always, more violent and active than its advocates, and frequently employ means, which the others do not, to accomplish their ends.

I have seen no publication yet, that ought in my judgment to shake the proposed constitution in the mind of an impartial and candid public. In fine, I have hardly seen one, that is not addressed to the passions of the people, and obviously calculated to alarm their

fears. Every attempt to amend the constitution at this time is in my opinion idle and vain. If there are characters, who prefer disunion, or separate confederacies, to the general government, which is offered to them, their opposition may, for aught I know, proceed from principle; but, as nothing, according to my conception of the matter, is more to be deprecated than a disunion or these distinct confederacies, as far as my voice can go it shall be offered in favor of the latter. That there are some writers, and others perhaps who may not have written, that wish to see this union divided into several confederacies, is pretty evident. As an antidote to these opinions, and in order to investigate the ground of objections to the constitution which is submitted, the *Federalist*, under the signature of PUBLIUS, is written. The numbers, which have been published, I send you. If there is a printer in Richmond, who is really well disposed to support the new constitution, he would do well to give them a place in his paper. They are, I think I may venture to say, written by able men; and before they are finished will, or I am mistaken, place matters in a true point of light. Although I am acquainted with the writers, who have a hand in this work, I am not at liberty to mention names, nor would I have it known, that they are sent by *me* to *you* for promulgation.*

You will recollect, that the business of the Potomac Company is withheld from the Assembly of Maryland, until it is acted upon in this State; that the sitting of that Assembly is expected to be short; and that our operations may be suspended, if there is no other recourse to be had than to common law process to ob-

* It hardly needs to be mentioned at this day, that the authors of the FEDERALIST were James Madison, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton.

tain the dividends, which are called for by the directors and not paid by the subscribers.

Certificate and commutable taxes I hope will be done away,* and that the Assembly will not interfere either with public treaties or private contracts. Bad indeed must the situation of a country be, when this is the case. With great pleasure I received the information respecting the commencement of my nephew's political course. I hope he will not be so buoyed up by the favorable impression it has made, as to become a babbler. I am, dear Sir, your most obedient, &c.

TO JAMES MADISON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 7 December, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

Since my last to you, I have been favored with your letters of the 28th of October and 18th of November. With the last came seven numbers of the *Federalist*, under the signature of PUBLIUS, for which I thank you. They are forwarded to a gentleman in Richmond for republication; the doing of which in this State will, I

* Various methods were devised for raising taxes by receiving substitutes for specie. The tax for satisfying the requisitions of Congress was allowed to be paid in part by certificates, or evidences of claims on the government, which had been given during the war. The different States had borrowed money, and issued loan-office certificates, which bore interest. Warrants were granted from time to time for the interest on such certificates. The State of Virginia had passed a law, authorizing these warrants to be received into the treasury in payment of certain kinds of taxes. — HENING'S *Statutes*, Vol. XII. p. 95. Tobacco was also received for taxes. — *Ib.* p. 455. And there was a strong wish, on the part of some, that other articles of produce should be receivable for the same purpose, leaving it to the State to dispose of such commodities, and convert them into specie. Taxes thus paid were called *commutable*.

am persuaded, have a good effect, as there are certainly characters, who are no friends to a general government; perhaps I should not go too far were I to add, who have no great objection to the introduction of anarchy and confusion.

The solicitude to discover what the several State legislatures would do with the constitution is now transferred to the several conventions; the decisions of which, being more interesting and conclusive, are consequently more anxiously expected than the other. What Pennsylvania and Delaware have done, or will do, must soon be known. Other conventions to the northward and eastward of them are treading closely on their heels; but what the three southern States have done, or in what light the new constitution is viewed by them, I have not been able to learn. North Carolina, it has been said, by some accounts from Richmond, will be governed in a great measure by the conduct of Virginia. The pride of South Carolina will not, I conceive, suffer this influence to work in her councils; and the disturbances in Georgia will, or I am mistaken, show the people the propriety of being united, and the necessity there is for a general government. If these, with the States eastward and northward of us, should accede to the federal government, I think the citizens of this State will have no cause to bless the opposers of it here, if they should carry their point. A paragraph in the Baltimore paper has announced a change in the sentiments of Mr. Jay on this subject, and adds, that, from being an admirer of the new form, he has become a bitter enemy to it. This relation, without knowing Mr. Jay's opinion, I disbelieve, from a conviction, that he would consider the matter well before he would pass any judgment. It is very unlikely, therefore, that a man of his knowledge and foresight

should turn on both sides of a question in so short a space.* I am, &c.

P. S. Since writing the foregoing, I have received a letter from a member of the Assembly in Richmond, dated the 4th instant, giving the following information.

"I am sorry to inform you, that the constitution has lost ground so considerably, that it is doubted whether it has any longer a majority in its favor. From a vote, which took place the other day, this would appear certain, though I cannot think it so decisive as its enemies consider it. It marks, however, the inconsistency of some of its opponents. At the time the resolutions calling a convention were entered into, Colonel M. sided with the friends to the constitution, and opposed any hint being given, expressive of the sentiments of the House as to amendments. But, as it was unfortunately omitted at that time to make provision for the subsistence of the convention, it became necessary to pass some resolution providing for any expense, which may attend an attempt to make amendments. As M. had on the former occasion declared, that it would be improper to make any discovery of the sentiments of the House on the subject, and that we had no right to suggest any thing to a body paramount to us, his ad-

* These impressions were speedily verified by a public declaration, on the part of Mr. Jay, of the falsehood of the charge. Mr. John Vaughan, a gentleman as zealous in protecting the reputation of his friends, as he has been through life for promoting every public and private object of usefulness and benevolence, wrote to Mr. Jay on the subject. He replied to Mr. Vaughan as follows.

"I thank you for your obliging letter, enclosing a paragraph respecting me in Mr. Oswald's paper. You have my authority to deny the charge of the sentiments it imputes to me, and to declare, that in my opinion it is advisable for the people of America to adopt the constitution proposed by the late convention. If you should think it expedient to publish this letter, I have no objection to its being done." — *New York, December 1st.*

vocating such a resolution was matter of astonishment. It is true, he declared it was not declaratory of our opinion; but the contrary must be very obvious. As I have heard many declare themselves friends to the constitution since the vote, I do not consider it as altogether decisive of the opinion of the House with respect to it.

"I am informed, both by General Wilkinson, who is just arrived here from New Orleans by way of North Carolina, and by Mr. Ross, that North Carolina is almost unanimous for adopting it. The latter received a letter from a member of that Assembly now sitting.

"In a debating society here, which meets once a week, this subject has been canvassed at two successive meetings, and is to be finally decided on to-morrow evening. As the whole Assembly, almost, has attended on these occasions, their opinion will be pretty well ascertained; and, as the opinion on this occasion will have much influence, some of Colonel Innis's friends have obtained a promise from him to enter the lists.

"The bill respecting British debts has passed our House, but with such a clause as I think makes it worse than a rejection."

The letter, of which I enclose you a printed copy, from Colonel R. H. Lee to the Governor, was circulated with great industry in manuscript four weeks before it went to press, and is said to have had a bad influence.* The enemies to the constitution leave no stone unturned to increase the opposition to it. I am, &c.

* This letter contained a series of objections to the constitution, as reported by the convention. It was circulated widely in the newspapers. In reply to General Washington's letter above, Mr. Madison wrote as follows.

"I was favored on Saturday with your letter of the 7th instant, along with which was covered the printed letter of Colonel Richard Henry Lee

TO SIR EDWARD NEWENHAM, IN IRELAND.

Mount Vernon, 25 December, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I thank you for the information which you gave me in your several letters, relative to the state of public affairs in your country. I hope the exertions of good men, and a concurrence of circumstances, will finally produce that tranquillity, concord, and happiness among you, which you so earnestly wish for.

The public attention here is at present wholly em-

---

to the Governor. It does not appear to me to be a very formidable attack on the new constitution, unless it should derive an influence from the names of the correspondents, which its intrinsic merits do not entitle it to. He is certainly not perfectly accurate in the statement of all his facts; and I should infer from the tenor of the objections in Virginia, that his plan of an executive would hardly be viewed as an amendment of that of the convention. It is a little singular, that three of the most distinguished advocates for amendments, and who expect to unite the thirteen States in their project, appear to be pointedly at variance with each other on one of the capital articles of the system. Colonel Lee proposes that the president should choose a council of eleven, and with their advice have the absolute appointment of all officers. Colonel Mason's proposition is, that a council of six should be appointed by the Congress. What degree of power he would confide to it, I do not know. The idea of the Governor [Randolph] is, that there should be a plurality of coequal heads, distinguished probably by other peculiarities in the organization. It is pretty certain, that some others, who make a common cause with them in the general attempt to bring about alterations, differ still more from them than they do from each other; and that they themselves differ as much on some other great points, as on the constitution of the executive.

"You did not judge amiss of Mr. Jay. The paragraph affirming a change in his opinion of the plan of the convention was an arrant forgery. He has contradicted it in a letter to Mr. John Vaughan, which has been printed in the Philadelphia gazettes. Tricks of this sort are not uncommon with the enemies of the new constitution. Colonel Mason's objections were, as I am told, published in Boston, mutilated of that which pointed at the regulation of commerce. Dr. Franklin's concluding speech, which you will meet with in one of the papers herewith enclosed, is both mutilated and adulterated, so as to change both the form and the spirit of it."—*New York, December 20th.*

ployed in considering and animadverting upon the form of government, proposed for these States by the late convention. The inefficacy of our present general system is acknowledged on all hands, and the proposed one has its opponents; but they bear so small a proportion to its friends, that there is little or no doubt of its taking place. Three States have already decided in its favor; two unanimously, and the other by a majority of two to one. These are the only States, whose conventions have as yet determined upon the subject; but, from every information, the others will be found pretty fully in sentiment with them. The establishment of an energetic general government will disappoint the hopes and expectations of those who are unfriendly to this country, give us a national respectability, and enable us to improve those commercial and political advantages, which nature and situation have placed within our reach.

I wrote to you some time since, and enclosed a letter from Dr. Franklin to me in answer to one which I had written respecting your son's being appointed consul at Marseilles. He applied to Mr. Jay, minister of foreign affairs, whose answer to him I likewise forwarded to you. The result of the application was, that it could not be granted, because there existed a resolution of Congress declaring that none but an American citizen should be appointed to that office.

I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Mount Vernon, 1 January, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I have received your favor of the 14th of August, and am sorry that it is not in my power to give any further information relative to the practicability of opening a communication between Lake Erie and the Ohio, than you are already possessed of. I have made frequent inquiries since the time of your writing at Annapolis, but could never collect any thing that was decided or satisfactory. I have again renewed them, and flatter myself with better prospects.

The accounts generally agree as to its being a flat country between the waters of Lake Erie and the Big Beaver, but differ very much with respect to the distance between their sources, their navigation, and the inconveniences which would attend the cutting of a canal between them. From the best information I have been able to obtain of that country, the sources of the Muskingum and Cayahoga approach nearer to each other than the Big Beaver; but a communication through the Muskingum would be more circuitous and difficult, having the Ohio to a greater extent to ascend, unless the latter could be avoided by opening a communication between James River and the Great Kenhawa, or between the Little Kenhawa and the west branch of the Monongahela, which is said to be very practicable by a short portage. As a proof of this, a road is now opened, or opening, under the authority and at the expense of the States of Virginia and Maryland, from the North Branch of the Potomac, commencing at the mouth of Savage River, to Cheat River; and continued from thence to the navigable water of the Little Kenhawa, at the cost of the former.

The distance between Lake Erie and the Ohio through the Big Beaver is however so much less than the route through the Muskingum, that it would in my opinion operate very strongly in favor of opening a canal between the sources of the nearest water of the Lake and the Big Beaver, although the distance between them should be much greater, and the operation more difficult, than to the Muskingum, as it is the direct line to the nearest shipping port on the Atlantic. I shall omit no opportunity of gaining every information relative to this important subject, and with pleasure communicate to you whatever may be worthy of your attention.

I did myself the honor to forward to you the plan of government formed by the convention, as soon as that body rose; but I was not a little disappointed, and mortified indeed, (as I wished to make the first offering of it to you,) to find by a letter dated the 9th of November in New York from Commodore Jones, that it was at that time in his possession. You have undoubtedly received it, or some other, ere now, and formed an opinion upon it. The public attention is at present wholly engrossed by this important subject. The legislatures of those States (Rhode Island excepted), which have met since the constitution was formed, have readily assented to its being submitted to a convention chosen by the people. Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, are the only States whose conventions have as yet decided upon it. In the first it was adopted by forty-six to twenty-three, and in the two others unanimously.

Connecticut and Massachusetts are to hold their conventions on the first and second Tuesdays of this month; Maryland in April, Virginia in June; and upon the whole it appears, so far as I have had an oppor-

tunity of learning the opinions of the people in the several States, that it will be received. There will undoubtedly be more or less opposition to its being adopted in most of the States, and in none a more formidable one than in this, as many influential characters here have taken a decided part against it, among whom are Mr. Henry, Colonel Mason, Governor Randolph, and Mr. Richard Henry Lee; but from every information, which I have been able to obtain, I think there will be a majority in its favor, notwithstanding their dissent. In New York a considerable opposition will also be given.

I am much obliged to you, my dear Sir, for the account which you gave me of the general state of affairs in Europe. I am glad to hear, that the *Assemblée des Notables* has been productive of good in France. The abuse of the finances, being disclosed to the King and the nation, must open their eyes, and lead to the adoption of such measures as will prove beneficial to them in future. From the public papers it appears, that the parliaments of the several provinces, and particularly that of Paris, have acted with great spirit and resolution. Indeed, the rights of mankind, the privileges of the people, and the true principles of liberty, seem to have been more generally discussed and better understood throughout Europe since the American revolution, than they were at any former period.

Although the finances of France and England were such, as you were led to suppose at the time you wrote to me, yet, if we credit the concurrent accounts from every quarter, there is little doubt that they have commenced hostilities before this. Russia and the Porte have formally begun the contest, and from appearances, as given to us, it is not improbable that a general war will be kindled in Europe. Should this

be the case, we shall feel more than ever the want of an efficient general government to regulate our commercial concerns, to give us a national respectability, and to connect the political views and interests of the several States under one head in such a manner, as will effectually prevent them from forming separate, improper, or indeed any connexion with the European powers, which can involve them in their political disputes. Our situation is such, as makes it not only unnecessary, but extremely imprudent, for us to take a part in their quarrels; and whenever a contest happens among them, if we wisely and properly improve the advantages, which nature has given us, we may be benefited by their folly, provided we conduct ourselves with circumspection and under proper restrictions; for I perfectly agree with you, that an extensive speculation, a spirit of gambling, or the introduction of any thing, which will divert our attention from agriculture, must be extremely prejudicial if not ruinous to us. I conceive, under an energetic general government, such regulations might be made, and such measures taken, as would render this country the asylum of pacific and industrious characters from all parts of Europe, encourage the cultivation of the earth by the high price, which its products would command, and draw the wealth and wealthy men of other nations into our bosom, by giving security to property and liberty to its holders.

I have the honor to be, &c.

TO WILLIAM GORDON.*

Mount Vernon, 1 January, 1788.

REVEREND SIR,

I have received your letter of the 6th of September, with flower seeds accompanying it, for which I beg you will accept my best thanks. I am glad to find by your letter, that you have begun printing your *History of the Revolution.* You have my best wishes for its success.

Our information from Europe is so various and contradictory, as to render it still doubtful whether a rupture will take place between England and France. Some accounts have even gone so far as to declare, that hostilities have already commenced; others, that vigorous preparations are making on both sides, and a war is inevitable; and others again mention pacific dispositions of the courts. But let their political views and interests be what they may, I hope we shall have wisdom enough not to take a part in their quarrels.

I would have forwarded to you a copy of the constitution proposed by the late convention for the United States; but, as you must undoubtedly have seen it before this, through the medium of the newspapers, or some other publication, the necessity of my doing it is superseded. I have the pleasure, however, to inform you, that there is the greatest prospect of its being adopted by the people. It has its opponents, as any system formed by the wisdom of man would undoubtedly have; but they bear but a small proportion to its friends, and differ among themselves in their objections. Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey have already decided in its favor, the first by a majority of two to

* Dr. Gordon was now in England, having sailed from Boston on the 16th of April, 1786.

one, and the two last unanimously. The dispositions in the other States, so far as I have been able to learn, are equally favorable, at least with Pennsylvania, and it is expected that their conventions will give a similar decision. New York, and possibly this State, may prove exceptions. I am, &c.

TO EDMUND RANDOLPH, GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA.

Mount Vernon, 8 January, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

The letter, which you did me the honor of writing to me on the 27th ultimo, with the enclosure,* came duly to hand. I receive them as a fresh instance of your friendship and attention. For both I thank you.

The diversity of sentiments upon the important matter, which has been submitted to the people, was as much expected as it is regretted by me. The various passions and motives, by which men are influenced, are concomitants of fallibility, and engrafted into our nature; but, had I entertained a latent hope, at the time you moved to have the constitution submitted to a second convention, that a more perfect form would be agreed to, in a word, that any constitution would be adopted under the impressions and instructions of the members, the publications, which have taken place since, would have eradicated it. How do the sentiments of the influential characters in this State, who are opposed to the constitution, and have favored the public with their opinions, quadrate with each other? Are they not at variance on some of the most important points? If the opponents in the *same* State can-

* Containing his objections to the new constitution.

not agree in their principles, what prospect is there of a coalescence with the advocates of the measure, when the different views and jarring interests of so wide and extended an empire are to be brought forward and combated?

To my judgment it is more clear than ever, that an attempt to amend the constitution, which is submitted, would be productive of more heat and greater confusion than can well be conceived. There are some things in the new form, I will readily acknowledge, which never did, and I am persuaded never will, obtain my cordial approbation; but I did then conceive, and do now most firmly believe, that in the aggregate it is the best constitution, that can be obtained at this epoch, and that this, or a dissolution of the Union, awaits our choice, and is the only alternative before us. Thus believing, I had not, nor have I now, any hesitation in deciding on which to lean.*

I pray your forgiveness for the expression of these sentiments. In acknowledging the receipt of your letter on this subject, it was hardly to be avoided, although I am well-disposed to let the matter rest entirely on its own merits, and leave men's minds to their own workings. With very great esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO COUNT DE ROCHAMBEAU.

Mount Vernon, 8 January, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have received your letter of the 28th of June, 1786, and 12th of May, 1787. In the former you

* An able and thorough elucidation of the general subject of this letter has been presented by Mr. Justice Story, in his chapter on the "Nature of the Constitution."—STORY's *Commentaries*, Vol. I. p. 279.

mention your having just returned from Holland, and were so obliging as to give me an account of the state of political affairs in that country. Since the time of your writing, their internal disputes have been brought to a crisis, and appear to have terminated rather against the patriots. What changes may be made in their government, what revolutions in their political state, and how far their connexions with the several powers of Europe may be affected by the termination, is yet unknown to us.

I am very glad to hear, that the *Assemblée des Notables* has been productive of good in France; the state of your finances was really alarming, and required a strict investigation and the sanative hand of the nation to restore them to their proper tone.

I now begin to hope, that the period is not very far distant, when this country will make a more respectable figure in the eyes of Europe, than it has hitherto done. The constitution formed by the late convention appears, as far as my information extends, to be highly acceptable to the people of these States. Whenever this government is established, we shall regain the confidence and credit among the European powers, which a want of energy in the present confederation has deprived us of; and shall likewise feel the benefit of those commercial and political advantages, which our situation holds out to us. This event must be extremely pleasing to every friend of humanity, and peculiarly so to you and to others, who must feel interested in the happiness and welfare of this country, from the part which you took in establishing her liberty and independence.

I lament with you, my dear Sir, that the distance between us is so great, as to deprive us of the pleasure and satisfaction of a frequent and regular communica-

tion by letter; for it often happens, either through the inattention of the person to whom letters are committed, or from some other cause, that they do not come to hand till months after their date. You will please to accept the compliments of the season, with my sincere wishes for many happy returns of it to you, and believe me to be, with the greatest respect, my dear Sir, your most obedient, &c.

TO SAMUEL ATHAWES.

Mount Vernon, 8 January, 1788.

SIR,

I have received your letter of the 26th of July last, informing me of the death of our much esteemed and worthy friend George William Fairfax. I sincerely condole with you and his other friends in England upon this occasion. Although the precarious state of his health, for several years past, must have prepared his friends in some measure for his death, yet the event could not take place without being sincerely lamented by all who knew him.

The appointment of executors and trustees in each country for his estates and affairs, separately and without any dependence upon each other, was in my opinion, a very judicious and necessary step; for the delays and inconveniences, which the distance would unavoidably produce, would have been an insuperable objection to their being joined, not to mention the difficulties, which must have arisen from the difference of the laws upon this point in the two countries.

The small case, which you directed to the care of Colonel Burwell, was forwarded by him and came safe to hand. I have sent the watch to Mr. Fairfax, and

the letters to their respective addresses. Notwithstanding the long and uninterrupted friendship, which subsisted between Colonel Fairfax and myself, and however desirous I may be to give every proof of my affection for him and his amiable relict, yet I must decline acting as an executor for his estate here. The deranged situation of my own private affairs, occasioned by my long absence from home during the late war, and the continual applications which are made to me for information, advice, or assistance, in consequence of a public office which I sustained, require my constant and unremitting attention, and would prevent a faithful discharge of the trust on my part, if I should accept it. I am, Sir, yours, &c.

TO WILLIAM McINTOSH.*

Mount Vernon, 8 January, 1788.

SIR,

I have received your letter of the 20th of August, enclosing your plan of government suggested for the United States of America. As a citizen of these States, I return you my best thanks for the interest you take in their happiness and prosperity; and as an individual, you will please to accept of my acknowledgments for your polite attention, in sending to me your sentiments upon so important a subject.

The want of an efficient general government in this

---

* This gentleman had written a letter to General Washington, dated at Avignon in France. The principal object of the writer was to forward a scheme of a new government, which he supposed would be suited to the United States. Other plans of this sort were sent to General Washington, and some of them anonymously.

country is universally felt and acknowledged. The convention, which met at Philadelphia in May last, for the purpose of forming a constitution for the United States, have sent one to the people, of which I now enclose you a copy, for their consideration and acceptance. It is to be submitted to conventions, chosen by the people in the several States, and by them approved or rejected. Three States only have as yet decided upon it, two of which accepted it unanimously and the other by a majority of two to one. Similar dispositions seem to prevail in the other States, and there is no doubt but that they will give it a determination equally favorable.

When a government is established in America, that can give energy to its laws and security to property, it is not to be doubted, that many persons of respectability and interest from the old world will make a valuable addition to the citizens of the new.

I am, Sir, &c.

TO RICHARD BUTLER.

Mount Vernon, 10 January, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I have received your letter of the 30th of November, accompanied by the Indian vocabulary, which you have been so obliging as to forward to me. I am so far from thinking any apology necessary on your part, for not having furnished me with the vocabulary at an earlier period, that I assure you it is a matter of surprise to me to find, that you have been able to complete a work of such difficulty and magnitude, as this appears to be, in so short a time, under the pain which you must have suffered, and the delays occasioned by your misfortune in breaking your leg.

The pleasing satisfaction, which you must enjoy from a reflection, that you have exerted yourself to throw light upon the original history of this country, to gratify the curiosity of the philosopher, and to forward researches into the probable connexion and communication between the northern parts of America and those of Asia, must make you a more ample compensation for the laborious task, which you have executed, than my warmest acknowledgments, which, however, I must beg you to accept.

The observations contained in your letter, respecting the different tribes of Indians inhabiting the western country, the traditions which prevail among them, and the reasoning deduced therefrom, are very valuable, and may lead to some useful discoveries. Those works, which are found upon the Ohio, and other traces of the country's having been once inhabited by a race of people more ingenious at least, if not more civilized, than those who at present dwell there, have excited the attention and inquiries of the curious to learn from whence they came, whither they are gone, and something of their history. Any clue, therefore, which can lead to a knowledge of these, must be gratefully received.

As you have had opportunities of gaining extensive knowledge and information respecting the western territory, its situation, rivers, and the face of the country, I must beg the favor of you, my dear Sir, to resolve the following queries, either from your own knowledge, or certain information, as well to gratify my own curiosity, as to enable me to satisfy several gentlemen of distinction in other countries, who have applied to me for information upon the subject.

1. What is the face of the country between the sources or canoe navigation of the Cayahoga, which

empties itself into Lake Erie, and the Big Beaver, and between the Cayahoga and the Muskingum?

2. The distance between the waters of the Cayahoga and each of the two rivers abovementioned?

3. Would it be practicable, and not very expensive, to cut a canal between the Cayahoga and either of the above rivers, so as to open a communication between the waters of Lake Erie and the Ohio?

4. Whether there is any more direct, practicable, and easy communication, than these, between the waters of Lake Erie and those of the Ohio, by which the fur and peltry of the upper country can be transported?

Any information you can give me relative to the above queries, from your own knowledge, will be most agreeable, but if that is not sufficiently accurate for you to decide upon, the best and most authentic accounts of others will be very acceptable.* Your letter to the Marquis de Lafayette shall be particularly attended to, and forwarded with mine. I am, dear Sir, with esteem and regard, &c.

TO JAMES MADISON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 10 January, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am indebted to you for your favors of the 20th and 26th ultimo, and I believe for that of the 14th also, and their enclosures. It does not appear to me, that there is any certain criterion in this State by which a decided judgment can be formed, as to the opinion entertained by its citizens with respect to the consti-

* The same queries were sent to General Irvine, who had commanded at Pittsburg during a part of the war

tution. My sentiments are, that it will be ultimately favored by a large majority. That the opposition should have gained strength at Richmond, among the members of the Assembly, is not, if true, to be wondered at, when we consider that the great adversaries to the constitution are all assembled at that place, acting conjointly, with the promulgated sentiments of Colonel Richard Henry Lee as auxiliary. It is said, however, and I believe it may be depended upon, that he, though he may retain his sentiments, has withdrawn, or means to withdraw, his opposition; because, as he has expressed himself, or as others have done it for him, he finds himself in bad company His brother, Francis L. Lee, on whose judgment the family place much reliance, is decidedly in favor of the new form, under a conviction, that it is the best that can be obtained, and because it promises energy, stability, and that security, which is, or ought to be, the wish of every good citizen of the Union.

How far the decision of the debating club, mentioned to you in a former letter, may be considered as auspicious of the final decision of the convention in this State, I will not prognosticate; but in this club the question, it seems, was determined by a very large majority in favor of the constitution. But of all the arguments, that may be used at the convention, which is to be held, the most prevailing one I expect will be, that nine States *at least* will have acceded to it. And if the unanimity or majorities in those which follow, are equal to those which are passed, the force of them will prove irresistible. The governor has given his reasons to the public for withholding his signature; a copy of them I send you.

Our Assembly has been long in session, employed chiefly, as far as I can understand, in rectifying some

of the mistakes of the last, and committing new ones for emendations by the next; yet, "Who so wise as we are?" We are held in painful suspense in regard to European affairs. War, or peace, seems yet undecided, although the first is loudly talked of. I have no regular correspondent in Massachusetts; otherwise, as an occasional matter, I should have had no objection to the communication of my sentiments to him, as they are unequivocal and decided. I am, &c.

P. S. I have this moment been informed, that the Assembly of North Carolina have postponed the meeting of the convention of that State until July. This seems to be evidently calculated for the purpose of taking the tone from Virginia.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 10 January, 1788.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

I fear you will believe me to have been remiss in attentions to you. My last letters I find have been unaccountably concentred in the same hands, and unreasonably delayed, entirely contrary to my expectation. When you have received them by the Chevalier Paul Jones, you will acquit me of any intended or real neglect. One of these letters, containing the form of government, which has been submitted by the Federal Convention to the people of these States, I wished to have got to your hands by the first conveyance, as it was my intention, that you should be among the first to be informed of the proceedings of that body.

It is with great pleasure I transmit to you, by this

conveyance, a vocabulary of the Shawanese and Delaware languages. Your perfect acquaintance with General Richard Butler, the same worthy officer who served under your orders, and who has taken the trouble to compile them, supersedes the necessity of my saying any thing in support of their veracity and correctness. I likewise send a shorter specimen of the language of the southern Indians. It was procured by that ingenious gentleman, Mr. Hawkins, a member of Congress from North Carolina, and lately a commissioner from the United States to the Indians of the south. I heartily wish the attempt of that singularly great character, the Empress of Russia, to form a universal dictionary, may be attended with the merited success.

To know the affinity of tongues seems to be one step towards promoting the affinity of nations. Would to God, the harmony of nations were an object that lay nearest to the hearts of sovereigns; and that the incentives to peace, of which commerce and facility of understanding each other are not the most inconsiderable, might be daily increased! Should the present or any other efforts of mine to procure information, respecting the different dialects of the aborigines in America, serve to reflect a ray of light on the obscure subject of language in general, I shall be highly gratified. For I love to indulge the contemplation of human nature in a progressive state of improvement and amelioration; and, if the idea would not be considered visionary and chimerical, I could fondly hope, that the present plan of the great potentate of the north might in some measure lay the foundation for that assimilation of manners and interests, which should one day remove many of the causes of hostility from amongst mankind.

At this moment, however, it appears by the current of intelligence from your side of the Atlantic, that but

too many motives and occasions exist for interrupting the public tranquillity. A war between the Russians and Turks, we learn, has broken out. How far, or in what manner, this may involve other nations seems to us, at this distance, uncertain. Extraordinary speculations and expectations arise from the conduct of the King of Prussia in the Dutch, and the Emperor of Germany in the Austrian, Netherlands. Nothing as yet has come to our knowledge, which indicates with certainty, whether hostilities will take place between France and England, or, in that event, how extensively the flames of war will spread. We are apprehensive that we have but too much reason to bewail the fate of the Dutch patriots.

To guard against the similar calamities of domestic discord, or foreign interposition, and effectually to secure our liberties with all the benefits of an efficient government, is now the important subject that engrosses the attention of all our part of America. You will doubtless have seen in the public papers, in what manner the new constitution has been attacked and defended. There have been some compositions published in its defence, which I think will at least do credit to American genius. I dare say its principles and tendencies have, also, before this time been amply discussed in Europe. Here, that is, in United America, it is strongly advocated by a very great and decided majority. The highest probability exists, that the proposed constitution will be adopted by more than nine States.

To-morrow I shall set out on a journey to view the progress, which has been made in clearing the Upper Falls of the Potomac. This business, in general, has been attended with as much success as could possibly have been expected. I have nothing more to add, but that Mrs. Washington and those under this roof desire

to be affectionately presented to yourself and those under yours. For myself, my dear Marquis, I am yours, &c.

TO CHARLES CARTER.

Mount Vernon, 12 January, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I find that an extract from my letter to you is running through all the newspapers, and is published in that of Baltimore with the addition of my name. Although I have no disinclination to the promulgation of my sentiments on the proposed constitution, not having concealed them on any occasion, yet I must nevertheless confess, that it gives me pain to see the hasty and indigested production of a private letter exhibited to the public, to be animadverted upon by the adversaries of the new government.

Could I have supposed, that the contents of a private letter, marked with haste, would have composed a newspaper paragraph, I certainly should have taken some pains to dress the sentiments (to whom known is indifferent to me) in less exceptionable language, and would have assigned some reasons in support of my opinion, and the charges against others. I am persuaded your intentions were good; but I am not less persuaded, that you have provided food for strictures and criticisms. Be this however as it may, it shall pass unnoticed by me, as I have no inclination and still less abilities for scribbling. With very great esteem and regard, I am, &c.*

---

* It appeared afterwards, that a copy of the letter had been taken and sent to press without Mr. Carter's knowledge.

TO JOHN JAY.

Mount Vernon, 20 January, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

Your goodness upon a former occasion, accompanied with assurances of forwarding any despatches I might have for Europe in future, is the cause of my troubling you with the letters herewith enclosed. The one for the Marquis de Lafayette contains vocabularies of the Delaware and Shawanese languages for the Empress of Russia. I beg leave, therefore, to recommend it to your particular care. To send it by post from Havre, I am informed, would be expensive; to trust it to chance might be still worse. I leave it to your judgment, therefore, to convey it in such a manner as you shall think best.

We are locked fast in frost; expecting as soon as the weather breaks to hear what the conventions of Connecticut and Massachusetts have resolved on with respect to the government, which is submitted to them. The determinations of your State on this important subject seem more problematical than any other; yet little doubt remains in my mind of the adoption of it in Virginia. I may be mistaken; for, going seldom from home and seeing few besides travellers, my information may be defective. North Carolina, we are told, has fixed a late period for the meeting of its convention. Hence it is not unfair to infer they mean to take the tone from this State.

I have heard with much concern, that both Mrs. Jay and yourself have been indisposed. I hope you are now perfectly restored. The best wishes and most affectionate regards of Mrs. Washington and myself are presented, and I am, &c.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 31 January, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 9th instant came to hand last evening. As you know whatever concerns your happiness and welfare cannot be indifferent to me, you will very readily believe me, when I assure you, that I take a feeling part in your anxiety and distress on account of your son, and most sincerely wish for his recovery.

I thank you, my dear Sir, for your observations upon the advantages, which might accrue from a settlement of the eastern parts of your State.* I am very sorry to find there is likely to be so powerful an opposition to the adoption of the proposed plan of government with you; and I am entirely of your opinion, that the business of the convention should be conducted with moderation, candor, and fairness, which are not incompatible with firmness. Although, as you justly observe, the friends of the new system may bear down the opposition, yet they would never be able, by precipitate or violent measures, to soothe and reconcile their minds to the exercise of the government, which is a matter that ought as much as possible to be kept in view, and temper their proceedings.†

---

* The new lands in the District of Maine.

† On the subject of the approaching Massachusetts convention, General Knox had recently expressed himself in a manner, which throws some light on the objects and relative strength of the parties in that State.

"The Massachusetts convention," said he, "were to meet on the 9th. The decision of Connecticut will influence, in a degree, their determination, and I have no doubt the constitution will be adopted in Massachusetts. But it is at this moment questionable whether it will be by a large majority. There are three parties existing in that State at

What will be the fate of the constitution in this State is impossible to tell, at a period so far distant from the meeting of the convention. My private opinion of the matter, however, is, that it will certainly be adopted. There is no doubt but the decision of other States will have great influence here, particularly of one so respectable as Massachusetts.

I feel myself much obliged by your promise to inform me of whatever transpires in your convention worthy of attention, and assure you that it will be gratefully received. With the sincerest regard, and the most ardent desire that your distress may be removed by the recovery of your son, I am, dear Sir, &c.

---

present, differing in their numbers, and greatly differing in their wealth and talents.

"The first is the commercial part of the State, to which are added all the men of considerable property, the clergy, the lawyers, including the judges of all the courts, and all the officers of the late army, and also the neighbourhood of all the great towns. Its numbers may include three sevenths of the State. This party are for the most vigorous government. Perhaps many of them would have been still more pleased with the new constitution, had it been more analogous to the British constitution.

"The second party are the eastern part of the State, lying beyond New Hampshire, formerly the Province of Maine. This party are chiefly looking towards the erection of a new State, and the majority of them will adopt or reject the new constitution as it may facilitate or retard their designs, without regarding the merits of the great question; this party, two sevenths.

"The third party are the insurgents, or their favorers, the great majority of whom are for an annihilation of debts public and private; and therefore they will not approve the new constitution; this party, two sevenths.

"If the first and second party agree, as is most probable, and also some of the party stated as in the insurgent interest, the constitution will be adopted by a great majority, notwithstanding all the exertions to the contrary." — *New York, January 14th.*

TO JAMES MADISON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 5 February, 1788.

My dear Sir,

I am indebted to you for several of your favors, and thank you for their enclosures. The rumor of war between France and England has subsided, and the poor patriots of Holland, it seems, are left to fight their own battles or negotiate, in either case with no great prospect of advantage. They must have been much deceived, or their conduct has been weak, precipitate, and absurd. The former, however, I believe is the truth.

I am sorry to find by yours and other accounts from Massachusetts, that the decision of its convention, at the time of their respective dates, remained problematical.* A rejection of the new form by that State would invigorate the opposition, not only in New York, but in all those which are to follow; at the same time it would afford materials for the minority, in such as have actu-

* *From Mr. Madison's Letter.* — "The intelligence from Massachusetts begins to be very ominous to the constitution. The antifederal party is reinforced by the insurgents, and by the Province of Maine, which apprehends greater obstacles to her scheme of a separate government from the new system, than may be otherwise experienced. And according to the prospect at the date of the latest letters, there was very great reason to fear, that the voice of that State would be in the negative. The operation of such an event on this State may easily be foreseen. Its legislature is now sitting, and is much divided. A majority of the Assembly are said to be friendly to the merits of the constitution. A majority of the senators actually convened are opposed to a submission of it to the convention. The arrival of the absent members will render the voice of that branch uncertain on the point of a convention. The decision of Massachusetts either way will involve the result in this State. The minority in Pennsylvania is very restless under their defeat. If they can get an Assembly to their wish, they will endeavour to undermine what has been done there. If backed by Massachusetts, they will probably be emboldened to make some more rash experiment. The information from Georgia continues to be favorable. The little we get from South Carolina is of the same complexion." — *New York, January 20th.*

ally agreed to it, to blow the trumpet of discord more loudly. The acceptance by a bare majority, though preferable to a rejection, is also to be deprecated. It is scarcely possible to form any decided opinion of the general sentiment of the people of this State on this point. Many have asked me with anxious solicitude if you did not mean to get into the convention, conceiving it of indispensable necessity. Colonel Mason, who returned but yesterday, I am told has offered himself for Stafford county, and his friends say he can be elected not only in that, but in the counties of Prince William and Fauquier also. The truth of this I know not. I rarely go from home, and my visitors, who, for the most part are travellers and strangers, have not the best means of information.

At the time you suggested for my consideration the expediency of a communication of my sentiments to any correspondent I might have in Massachusetts on the proposed constitution, I did not recollect that General Lincoln and myself frequently interchanged letters; much less did I expect, that a hasty and indigested extract from a letter which I had written, intermingled with a variety of other matters, to Colonel Charles Carter in answer to one I had received from him, on the subject of some experiments we had made in farming, wolves, wolf-dogs, and sheep, was then in the press, and would bring them to public view by means of the general circulation I find that extract has had. Although I never have concealed, and am perfectly regardless who becomes acquainted with my sentiments with respect to the proposed constitution, yet nevertheless, as no pains have been taken to dress the ideas, nor any reasons assigned in support of the opinions, I feel myself hurt by the publication, and thus informed my friend. In answer, he has fully acquitted himself of the

intention; but his zeal in the cause prompted him to distribute copies, under a prohibition, which was disregarded, that it should not go to the press. As you have seen the crude, or rude extract, as you may please to term it, I will add no more on the subject.

Perceiving that the *Federalist*, under the signature of PUBLIUS, is about to be republished, I would thank you to forward to me three or four copies, one of which to be bound, and inform me of the cost.

I am, &c.

TO THE CHEVALIER DE LA LUZERNE.

Mount Vernon, 7 February, 1788.

SIR,

The Count de Moustier, your successor in office, has forwarded from New York the letter, in which you did me the honor to bring me acquainted with the merits of that nobleman. Since it is the misfortune of America not to be favored any longer with your residence, it was necessary, to diminish our regrets, that so worthy and respectable a character should be appointed your successor. I shall certainly be happy in cultivating his acquaintance and friendship. The citizens, from gratitude as well as from personal considerations, will, I am persuaded, treat him with the greatest respect. Congress, I doubt not, will by every means in their power desire to make his sojourn in the United States as agreeable as it possibly can be.

But, Sir, you may rest assured that your abilities and dispositions to serve this country were so well understood, and your services so properly appreciated, that the residence of no public minister will ever be longer remembered, or his absence more sincerely re-

gretted. It will not be forgotten, that you were a witness to the dangers, the sufferings, the exertions, and the successes of the United States, from the most perilous crisis to the hour of triumph. The influence of your agency on the cabinet to produce a coöperation, and the prowess of your countrymen coöperating with ours in the field to secure the liberties of America, have made such an indelible impression on the public mind, as will never be effaced. Wherever you may be, our best wishes will follow you. And such is our confidence in your disinterested friendship, that we are certain you will wish to be useful to us, with whatever mission you may be honored by your King. It has been surmised, on I know not what authority, that there was a probability of your being employed in a diplomatic capacity at the court of London. Should this be the case, your zeal may still find occasions of being serviceable to America, and profitable to your own country at the same time; for I conceive the commercial interests of the two nations are in many instances blended, and in opposition to those of Great Britain.

By intelligence of a more recent date than that brought by the Count de Moustier, we learn that the political clouds, which threatened to burst in a storm on France and England, are blown over. The Dutch patriots, I fear, have been disunited, imprudent, impetuous; and that the King of Prussia has not acted worthily or wisely. Should his measures drive the courts of Versailles and Vienna into a union of plans, should the embers of war be but imperfectly quenched, he may yet repent the temerity of intermeddling with the internal affairs of a foreign power. In the mean time, the new scene that is opened in the north, by the rupture between the Russians and Turks, must call men's attention to that quarter; as it can hardly avoid pro-

ducing events, which will be attended with serious, extensive, and durable consequences.

I feel, Sir, not only for myself, but in behalf of my country, under great obligations for the affectionate wishes you have the goodness to make, with respect to the tranquillity and happiness of America. Separated as we are by a world of water from other nations, if we are wise, we shall surely avoid being drawn into the labyrinth of their politics, and involved in their destructive wars.

You will doubtless have seen, long before this time, the constitution which was proposed by the federal convention for the United States. The merits of this constitution have been discussed in a great variety of newspaper and other publications. In a series of essays in the New York Gazettes, under title of *Federalist*, it has been advocated with great ability. In short, it seems, so far as I have been able to learn, to be a prevalent opinion, that it will have been accepted by nine States, or more, early in the ensuing summer. With sentiments of great respect and consideration,

I have the honor to be, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 7 February, 1788.

My dear Marquis,

You know it always gives me the sincerest pleasure to hear from you, and therefore I need only say, that your two kind letters of the 9th and 15th of October, so replete with personal affection and confidential intelligence, afforded me inexpressible satisfaction. I shall myself be happy in forming an acquaintance and cultivating a friendship with the new

minister plenipotentiary of France, whom you have commended as a "sensible and honest man." These are qualities too rare and too precious not to merit particular esteem. You may be persuaded, that he will be well received by the Congress of the United States, because they will not only be influenced in their conduct by his individual merits, but also by their affection for the nation, of whose sovereign he is the representative. It is an undoubted fact, that the people of America entertain a grateful remembrance of past services, as well as a favorable disposition for commercial and friendly connexions with your nation.

You appear to be, as might be expected from a real friend to this country, anxiously concerned about its present political situation. So far as I am able, I shall be happy in gratifying that friendly solicitude. As to my sentiments with respect to the merits of the new constitution, I will disclose them without reserve, although by passing through the post-offices they should become known to all the world, for in truth I have nothing to conceal on that subject. It appears to me, then, little short of a miracle, that the delegates from so many States, different from each other, as you know, in their manners, circumstances, and prejudices, should unite in forming a system of national government, so little liable to well-founded objections. Nor am I yet such an enthusiastic, partial, or undiscriminating admirer of it, as not to perceive it is tinctured with some real though not radical defects. The limits of a letter would not suffer me to go fully into an examination of them; nor would the discussion be entertaining or profitable. I therefore forbear to touch upon it. With regard to the two great points, the pivots upon which the whole machine must move, my creed is simply,

First, that the general government is not invested

with more powers, than are indispensably necessary to perform the functions of a good government; and consequently, that no objection ought to be made against the quantity of power delegated to it.

Secondly, that these powers, as the appointment of all rulers will for ever arise from, and at short, stated intervals recur to, the free suffrage of the people, are so distributed among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, into which the general government is arranged, that it can never be in danger of degenerating into a monarchy, an oligarchy, an aristocracy, or any other despotic or oppressive form, so long as there shall remain any virtue in the body of the people.

I would not be understood, my dear Marquis, to speak of consequences, which may be produced in the revolution of ages, by corruption of morals, profligacy of manners, and listlessness in the preservation of the natural and unalienable rights of mankind, nor of the successful usurpations, that may be established at such an unpropitious juncture upon the ruins of liberty, however providently guarded and secured; as these are contingencies against which no human prudence can effectually provide. It will at least be a recommendation to the proposed constitution, that it is provided with more checks and barriers against the introduction of tyranny, and those of a nature less liable to be surmounted, than any government hitherto instituted among mortals. We are not to expect perfection in this world; but mankind, in modern times, have apparently made some progress in the science of government. Should that, which is now offered to the people of America, be found on experiment less perfect than it can be made, a constitutional door is left open for its amelioration.

Some respectable characters have wished, that the

States, after having pointed out whatever alterations and amendments may be judged necessary, would appoint another federal convention to modify it upon those suggestions. For myself, I have wondered, that sensible men should not see the impracticability of this scheme. The members would go fortified with such instructions, that nothing but discordant ideas could prevail. Had I but slightly suspected, at the time when the late convention was in session, that another convention would not be likely to agree upon a better form of government, I should now be confirmed in the fixed belief that they would not be able to agree upon any system whatever; so many, I may add, such contradictory and unfounded objections have been urged against the system in contemplation, many of which would operate equally against every efficient government that might be proposed. I will only say, as a further opinion founded on the maturest deliberation, that there is no alternative, no hope of alteration, no intermediate resting-place, between the adoption of this and a recurrence to an unqualified state of anarchy, with all its deplorable consequences.

Since I had the pleasure of writing to you last, no material alteration in the political state of affairs has taken place to change the prospect of the constitution's being adopted by nine States or more. Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and Connecticut, have already done it. It is also said Georgia has acceded. Massachusetts, which is perhaps thought to be rather more doubtful than when I last addressed you, is now in convention.

A spirit of emigration to the western country is very predominant. Congress have sold, in the year past, a pretty large quantity of land on the Ohio for public securities, and thereby diminished the domestic debt

considerably. Many of your military acquaintances, such as Generals Parsons, Varnum, and Putnam, Colonels Tupper, Sprout, and Sherman, with many more, propose settling there. From such beginnings much may be expected.

The storm of war between England and your nation, it seems, is dissipated. I hope and trust the political affairs in France are taking a favorable turn. If the Turks will suffer themselves to be precipitated into a war, they must abide the consequences. Some politicians speculate on a triple alliance between the two imperial courts and Versailles.

It gives me great pleasure to learn, that the present ministry of France are friendly to America, and that Mr. Jefferson and yourself have a prospect of accomplishing measures, which will mutually benefit and improve the commercial intercourse between the two nations. Every good wish attend you and yours.

I am, &c.

TO COUNT DE MOUSTIER.

Mount Vernon, 7 February, 1788.

Sir,

I have received the letter, which your Excellency did me the honor to address to me on the 24th of January, and take the earliest occasion of expressing my warmest acknowledgments for your favorable opinion, as well as offering my sincerest congratulations on your safe arrival in this country. I am at the same time to return you my thanks for the trouble you had the goodness to take, in conveying to me the letters of my noble friends the Marquis de Lafayette and the Chevalier de la Luzerne. Indeed nothing was wanting

to the pleasure afforded by their communications, but that of having received them at your hands, and thereby having had an opportunity of demonstrating the promptitude of my attention to their recommendations. In the mean time I have taken the liberty, which I beg your Excellency to excuse, of remitting my answers for them to your care.

The fidelity, honor, and bravery of the troops of your nation, to which I have been a witness, the enlightened sentiments of patriotism, and the delicate feelings of friendship, which have actuated great numbers of your compatriots, with whom I may boast the happiness of being intimately connected, and above all, that lively interest, which your illustrious monarch and his faithful subjects took in the success of the American arms, and the confirmation of our independence, have endeared the national character to me, and formed attachments and left impressions, which no distance of time, or contingency of events, can possibly remove. Though but a private citizen myself, and in a measure secluded from the world, I am conscious the assertion will be well founded, when I venture to affirm, that such are the feelings and such the affections of the American people.

Deprived of the felicity of having been able to form a personal acquaintance with your Excellency, on account of your arriving at a distance, I regret that misfortune, and earnestly wish some favorable circumstance may hasten a moment so desirable to me; and I pray you will be persuaded, that I should be truly happy to receive you, in the plain, unceremonious American style, on the banks of the Potomac. The partial knowledge of your merits, which had preceded your arrival, and the very honorable testimonials of our friends in France, added to the advantage you possess in being

the representative of a sovereign, the earliest, most faithful, and most powerful ally of these infant States, cannot fail to make your presence extremely agreeable to Congress and the American people. Permit me to add the assurance, Sir, that your mission cannot be more acceptable or your friendship more flattering to any American, than to him who has the honor to subscribe himself, your Excellency's, &c.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 11 February, 1788.

My dear Sir,

As you must be convinced, that whatever affects your happiness or welfare cannot be indifferent to me, I need not tell you, that I was most sensibly affected by your letter of the 20th of January. Yes, my dear Sir, I sincerely condole with you on the loss of a worthy, amiable, and valuable son. Although I had not the happiness of a personal acquaintance with him, yet the character which he sustained, and his near connexion with you, are to me sufficient reasons for lamenting his death. It is unnecessary for me to offer any consolation on the present occasion, or to a mind like yours. It can only be drawn from that source, which never fails to give a bountiful supply to those, who reflect justly. Time alone can blunt the keen edge of afflictions. Philosophy and our religion hold out to us such hopes as will, upon proper reflection, enable us to bear with fortitude the most calamitous incidents of life, and this is all that can be expected from the feelings of humanity.

I thank you, my dear Sir, for the information which you forwarded me of the proceedings of your conven-

tion. It is unhappy, that a matter of such high importance cannot be discussed with that candor and moderation, which would throw light on the subject, and place its merits in a proper point of view. But in an assembly so large as your convention, and composed of such various and opposite characters, it is almost impossible but that some things will occur, which would rouse the passions of the most moderate man on earth. It is however to be hoped, that your final decision will be agreeable to the wishes of good men, and favorable to the constitution. Mrs. Washington thanks you for your kind remembrance of her, and joins me in the sincerest condolence for your loss. With sentiments of the highest esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD.

Mount Vernon, 13 February, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I think with you, that the life of a husbandman of all others is the most delightful. It is honorable, it is amusing, and, with judicious management, it is profitable.

I am glad to find, that your first essay to raise Indian corn in drills has succeeded so much to your satisfaction; but I am inclined to think, unless restoratives are more abundant than they are to be found on common farms, that six feet by two will be too oppressive to your land. Experience has proved, that every soil will sink under the growth of this plant, whether from the luxuriancy and exhausting quality of it, or the manner of tillage, or both, is not very certain; because instead of two thousand four hundred and twenty plants, which stand on an acre at six feet apart with two stalks in a hill, as is usual in land of middling quality,

you have three thousand six hundred and thirty at six feet by two, single stalks. Whether the exposing of land to the rays of the sun in summer is injurious, is a question yet more difficult to solve than the other. In my opinion it is; but this controverts the practice of summer fallows, which, especially in heavy land, some of the best practical farmers in England contend for as indispensably necessary, notwithstanding the doctrine of Mr. Young and many others, who are opposed to them.

The reason, however, which induced me to give my corn-rows the wide distance of ten feet, was not because I thought it essential to the growth of that plant, but because I introduced other plants between them. And this practice, from the experience of two years, one the wettest, and the other the driest that ever was felt on my estate, I am resolved to continue until the inutility of it, or something more advantageous, shall point out the expediency of a change. But I mean to practise it with variations, fixing on eight feet by two as the medium or standing distance, which will give more plants by three hundred to the acre, than six feet each way with two stalks to the hill will do.

As all my corn will be thus drilled, so between all I mean to put in drills also potatoes, carrots, and turnips, alternately, that not one sort more than another may have the advantage of soil, thereby to ascertain the comparative quantity and value of each of these plants as food for horses and stock of every kind. From the trials I have made, under the disadvantages already mentioned, I am well satisfied, that my crop of corn in this way will equal the product of the same fields in the usual mode of cultivation, and that the quantity of potatoes, proportionate to the number of rows, will quadruple the corn. I entertain the same opinion with

respect to carrots; but, being more unlucky in the latter, I cannot speak with so much confidence, and still less can I do it with respect to turnips.

From this husbandry, and statement of what I conceive to be facts, any given number of acres will yield as much corn in the new, as they will in the old way, and will moreover with little or no extra labor produce four times as many potatoes or carrots, which adds considerably to the profit of the field. But here it may be asked, Will the land sustain these crops, or rather the potatoes in addition to the corn? This is a question my own experience does not enable me to answer. The received opinion of many practical farmers in England is, that potatoes and carrots are ameliorators, not exhausters of the soil, preparing it well for other crops. But I do not scruple to confess, that, notwithstanding the profit which appears to result from the growth of corn and potatoes, or corn and carrots, or both thus blended, my wish is to exclude Indian corn altogether from my system of cropping; but we are so habituated to the use of this grain, and it is so much better for negroes than any other, that it is not to be discarded; consequently to introduce it in the most profitable, or least injurious manner, ought to be the next consideration with the farmer.

To do this, some are of opinion that a small spot, set apart solely for the purpose, and kept highly manured, is the best method. An instance in proof is adduced, of a gentleman near Baltimore, who for many years past from the same ground has not made less than ten barrels to the acre in drills, six feet apart, and, if I recollect rightly, eighteen inches in the rows. But query, where the farmer has no other resource than the manure of his own farm, will not his other crops be starved by this extra allowance to the Indian corn?

I am inclined to think they will; and for that reason I shall try the intermixture of potatoes, carrots, and turnips, or either, as from practice shall be found most profitable, with my corn, which shall become a component part of some regular and systematic plan best adapted to the nature of my soil.

To societies, which have been formed for the encouragement of agriculture, is the perfection to which husbandry is now arrived in England indebted. Why then does not this country (Virginia I mean) follow so laudable and beneficial an example? And particularly why do not the gentlemen in the vicinity of Fredericksburg begin this work? Your lands are peculiarly well adapted to it. There are more of you in a small circle than I believe are to be found in the same compass almost anywhere; and you are well able to afford experiments; from which, and not from theory, are individuals to derive useful knowledge, and the public a benefit. I am, &c.

TO WILLIAM IRVINE.

Mount Vernon, 18 February, 1788.

SIR,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 27th ultimo, and to thank you for the information contained in it.* As a communication between the waters of Lake Erie and those of the Ohio is a matter, which promises great public utility, and as every step towards the investigation of it may be considered as promoting the general interest of our country, I need

* In answer to queries about the navigable waters of the country between Lake Erie and the Ohio River. See the letter to General Richard Butler, dated January 10th.

make no apology to you for any trouble, that I have given upon this subject.

I am fully sensible, that no account can be sufficiently accurate to hazard any operations upon, without an actual survey. My object in wishing a solution of the queries proposed to you was, that I might be enabled to return answers, in some degree satisfactory, to several gentlemen of distinction in foreign countries, who have applied to me for information on the subject in behalf of others, who wish to engage in the fur trade, and at the same time to gratify my own curiosity, and assist me in forming a judgment of the practicability of opening a communication, should it ever be seriously in contemplation.

1. Could a channel once be opened to convey the fur and peltry from the Lakes into the eastern country, its advantages would be so obvious as to induce an opinion, that it would in a short time become the channel of conveyance for much the greater part of the commodities brought from thence.

2. The trade, which has been carried on between New York and that quarter, is subject to great inconveniences from the length of the communication, number of portages, and at seasons from ice; yet it has notwithstanding been prosecuted with success.

I shall feel myself much obliged by any further information, that you may find time and inclination to communicate to me on this head. I am Sir, with great esteem, your most obedient, &c.

TO SAMUEL GRIFFIN.

Mount Vernon, 20 February, 1788.

SIR,

I have been duly honored and greatly affected with the receipt of the resolution of the visitors and governors of William and Mary College, appointing me chancellor of the same, and have to thank you for your polite attention in the transmission of it. Not knowing particularly what duties, or whether any active services, are immediately expected from the person holding the office of chancellor, I have been greatly embarrassed in deciding upon the public answer proper to be given. It is for that reason I have chosen to explain in this private communication my situation and feelings, and to defer an ultimate decision until I shall have been favored with farther information on this subject.

My difficulties are briefly these. On the one hand, nothing in this world could be farther from my heart, than a want of respect for the worthy gentlemen in question, or a refusal of the appointment with which they have honored me, provided its duties are not incompatible with the mode of life to which I have entirely addicted myself; and, on the other hand, I would not for any consideration disappoint the just expectations of the convocation by accepting an office, whose functions I previously knew, from my preëngagements and occupations, I should be absolutely unable to perform.

Although, as I observed before, I know not specifically what those functions are, yet, Sir, I have conceived that a principal duty required of the chancellor might be a regular and indispensable visitation once, or perhaps twice, a year. Should this be expected, I must decline accepting the office. For, notwithstanding I

most sincerely and ardently wish to afford whatever little influence I may possess, in patronizing the cause of science, I cannot, at my time of life and in my actual state of retirement, persuade myself to engage in new and extensive avocations.

Such being the sentiments of a heart unaccustomed to disguise, I flatter myself the candid manner in which I have explained them, cannot be displeasing to the convocation; and that the intervening delay between the present time, and that in which I shall have the pleasure of receiving such ulterior explanations as may enable me to give a definitive answer, will not prove very detrimental to the collegiate interests. I am, &c.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 28 February, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your three letters of the 3d, 6th, and 9th instant. The information conveyed by the last was extremely pleasing to me, though I cannot say it was altogether unexpected, as the tenor of your former letters had, in some measure, prepared me for the event; but the conduct of the minority was more satisfactory than could have been expected.* The full and fair discussion, which you gave the subject in your convention, was attended with the

* *From General Lincoln's Letter.* — "Nothing very material has taken place since my last, saving what is mentioned in the enclosed paper. By that you will learn what was the temper of many of those, who had been in the opposition. I think they discovered a candor, which does them honor, and promises quiet in the State. Some however will, I fear, sow the seeds of discontent, and attempt to inflame the minds of the people in the country. They have no real object, as they cannot be certain that it will ever pass nine States. I hope and trust this con-

happiest consequences. It afforded complete information to all those, who went thither with dispositions to be informed, and at the same time gave an opportunity to confute and point out the fallacy of those specious arguments, which were offered in opposition to the proposed government. Nor is this all. The conciliating behaviour of the minority will strike a damp on the hopes, which opponents in other States might otherwise have formed from the smallness of the majority, and must be greatly influential in obtaining a favorable determination in those States, which have not yet decided upon it.

There is not perhaps a man in Virginia less qualified than I am to say, from his own knowledge and observation, what will be the fate of the constitution here; for I very seldom ride beyond the limits of my own farms, and am wholly indebted to those gentlemen who visit me for any information of the disposition of the people towards it; but from all I can collect, I have not the smallest doubt of its being accepted.

I thank you, my dear Sir, for the accounts which you have, from time to time, transmitted to me since the meeting of your convention. Nothing could have been more grateful or acceptable to me. I am also obliged by your promise to inform me of any impor-

---

sideration will quiet them at present; when it shall have passed nine States, it will be too late for any one State to think of opposing it.

"Considering the great disorders, which took place in this State the last winter, and considering the great influence, that the spirit which then reigned has had since upon all our operations, it may be supposed, that we have got through this business pretty well; and, considering, also, that when we came together a very decided majority of the convention were against adopting the constitution. Every exertion will be made to inform the people, and to quiet their minds. It is very fortunate for us, that the clergy are pretty generally with us. They have in this State a very great influence over the people, and they will contribute much to the general peace and happiness." — *Boston, February 9th.*

tant matters, that may transpire; and you know I shall at all times be happy to hear of your welfare.

I am, dear Sir, &c.

TO JAMES MADISON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 2 March, 1788.

SIR,

The decision of Massachusetts, notwithstanding its concomitants, is a severe stroke to the opponents of the proposed constitution in this State; and, with the favorable decision of those States, which have gone before it, and such as are likely to follow, will have a powerful operation on the minds of men, who are not more influenced by passion, pique, and resentment, than they are by candor, moderation, and judgment. Of the former description, however, I am sorry to say there are too many; and among them some, who would hazard every thing rather than fail in their opposition, or have the sagacity of their prognostications impeached by the issue.

The determination you have come to, will give much pleasure to your friends.* From those in your county you will learn with more certainty, than from me, the expediency of your attending the election in it. With some, to have differed in sentiment is to have passed the bounds of their friendship, although you should go no further; with others, for the honor of humanity, I hope there is more liberality. But the consciousness of having discharged that duty, which we owe to our country, is superior to all other considerations, and will put these out of the question.

* A determination to allow his friends in Orange County, Virginia, to support his election as a delegate from that county to the State convention, which was to decide on the new constitution.

His Most Christian Majesty speaks and acts in a style not very pleasing to republican ears, or to republican forms; nor do I think it is altogether so to the temper of his own subjects at this day. Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth. The checks he endeavours to give it, however warranted by ancient usage, will more than probably kindle a flame, which may not be easily extinguished, though it may be smothered for a while by the armies at his command and the nobility in his interest. When a people are oppressed with taxes, and have cause to believe that there has been a misapplication of the money, they ill brook the language of despotism. This, and the mortification, which the pride of the nation must have undergone with respect to the affairs of Holland, if it is fair to judge from appearances, may be productive of events, which prudence forbids one to mention.

To-morrow the elections for delegates to the State convention begin; and, as they will tread close upon the heels of each other, they will make an interesting and important month. With the most friendly sentiments and affectionate regard, I am, &c.

TO HENRY KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 3 March, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I pray you to accept my acknowledgments of your favors of the 10th and 14th ultimo, and congratulation on the acceptance of the new constitution by the State of Massachusetts. Had this been done without its concomitants, and by a larger majority, the stroke would have been more severely felt by the antifeder-

alists in other States. As it is, it operates as a damper to their hopes, and is a matter of disappointment and chagrin to them all.

Under the circumstances enumerated in your letters, the favorable decision, which has taken place in that State, could hardly have been expected.* Nothing less than the good sense, sound reasoning, moderation, and temper of the supporters of the measure could have carried the question. It will be very influential on the equivocal States. In the two, which are next to convene, New Hampshire and Maryland, there can be no doubt of its adoption, and in South Carolina but little, which will make nine States without a dissentient. The force of this argument is hardly to be resisted by local sophistry. Candor and prudence, therefore, it is to be hoped will prevail; and yet I believe there are some characters among us, who would hazard every thing rather than cease their opposition, or leave to

* *From General Knox's Letter.* — "The constitution has labored in Massachusetts exceedingly more than was expected. The opposition has not arisen from a consideration of the merits or demerits of the thing itself, as a political machine, but from a deadly principle levelled at the existence of all government whatever. The principle of insurgency expanded, deriving fresh strength and life from the impunity with which the rebellion of last year was suffered to escape. It is a singular circumstance, that in Massachusetts the property, the ability, and the virtue of the State, are almost solely in favor of the constitution. Opposed to it are the late insurgents, and all those who abetted their designs, constituting four fifths of the opposition. A few, very few indeed, well-meaning people are joined to them. The friends of the constitution in that State, without overrating their own importance, conceived that the decision of Massachusetts would most probably settle the fate of the proposition. They therefore proceeded most cautiously and wisely, debated every objection with the most guarded good nature and candor, but took no questions on the several paragraphs, and thereby prevented the establishment of parties. This conduct has been attended with the most beneficial consequences. It is now no secret, that, on the opening of the convention, a majority were prejudiced against it." — *New York, February 10th.*

the operation of the government the chance of proving the fallacy of their predictions, by which their sagacity and foresight might be impeached.

From the last European intelligence, the political state of affairs in France seems to be in a delicate situation. What will be the issue is not easy to determine; but the spirit, which is diffusing itself, may produce changes in that government, which a few years ago could hardly have been dreamt of. All these things, together with the importance assumed by Great Britain on the occasion of her dispute with this power, and the state of other powers on the Continent, are strong additional motives for us to establish a well-toned government. I am, &c.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 10 March, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 20th ultimo, and the papers accompanying it, came duly to hand. I believe none of your letters to me have miscarried, as I have received the papers containing the debates of your convention very regularly.

I am sorry to hear, that the issue of the government in New Hampshire is in any measure dubious. Our concurrent accounts from that quarter have been favorable in the highest degree. They would have justified the expectation of unanimity in their convention.*

* Only four days after writing the letter, to which the above was a reply, General Lincoln obtained more definite intelligence of the proceedings of the New Hampshire convention.

"A gentleman of this town," said he, "who attended the convention the last week has returned, and informs us that many of the members came instructed; and that, though convinced, some of them, of the pro-

The growing attachment of the people in your State to the proposed constitution is certainly a strong proof of its general excellence. It shows that a due and impartial consideration of the subject will decide in its favor.

At the end of the present month we shall be able to form a tolerable judgment of what may be its fate here; as our returns for the delegates to the convention will be known at that time, and the characters chosen will be pretty generally decided in their opinions upon the matter before their delegation, since that will determine the people in their choice. The general tenor of the information, which I derive from those gentlemen who call upon me, seems to be, that the opposition is losing ground, and that nothing is wanting to render the people so favorably disposed towards it, as to put the decision beyond a doubt, but proper information upon the subject. The opponents are indefatigable in their exertions, while the friends to the constitution seem to rest the issue upon the goodness of their cause. There will undoubtedly be a greater weight of abilities against the adoption in this convention than in any other. We had a right to expect it from the characters, who first declared against it here; but, notwithstanding this, my own opinion is, as it has ever been, that it will be received. With great esteem and regard, I am, &c.

---

priety and importance of adopting the proposed constitution, yet they felt themselves so bound by their instructions, that they must vote against it. From this view of the matter it was thought best to adjourn; and as it was not probable, that a majority were in favor of the adoption, an adjournment accordingly on Friday last took place to the third Wednesday in June. They could not well have it at an earlier day, as the General Court, or their Assembly meets, and a governor is to be elected between this and that time. Those, who are best acquainted with the temper of that State, say, that there is no reason to doubt but the constitution will be finally adopted there." — *Boston, February 24th.*

TO THE COUNT DE MOUSTIER.

Mount Vernon, 26 March, 1788.

SIR,

I have received the letter, which your Excellency did me the honor of addressing to me by the hand of Mr. Madison. While I am highly gratified with the justice you do me in appreciating the friendly sentiments I entertain for the French nation, I cannot avoid being equally astonished and mortified in learning, that you have met with any subject of discontent or inquietude since your arrival in America.* Be assured, Sir, as nothing could have been more unexpected, so nothing can now give me greater pleasure, than to be instrumental in removing, as far as may be in the power of a private citizen, every occasion of uneasiness that may have occurred. I have even hoped, from the short time of your residence here, and the partial acquaintance you may have had with the characters of the persons, that a natural distance in behaviour and reserve in address may have appeared as intentional coldness and neglect. I am sensible that the apology itself, though it should be well founded, would be but an indifferent one; yet it would be better than none, while it served to prove, that it is our misfortune not to have the same cheerfulness in appearance and facility in deportment, which some nations possess. And this I believe in a certain degree to be a real fact; and that such a reception is sometimes given by individuals, as may affect a foreigner with very disagreeable sensations, when not the least shadow of an affront is intended.

* The French minister had fancied himself neglected in certain points of etiquette, in which his rank as a public functionary was not recognised in such a manner as he had expected.

As I know the predilections of most of our leading characters for your nation; as I had seen the clearest proofs of affection for your King given by the people of this country, on the birth of the Dauphin; as I had heard before the arrival of your letter, that you had been received at a public audience by Congress with all the marks of attention, which had ever been bestowed upon a representative of any sovereign power; and as I found that your personal character stood in the fairest point of light; I must confess I could not have conceived, that there was one person in public office in the United States capable of having treated with indifference, much less with indignity, the representative from a court, with which we have ever been upon the most friendly terms. And confident I am, that it is only necessary for such conduct to be known to be detested.

But in the mean time, so ardently do I wish to efface any ill impressions, which may have been made upon your Excellency's mind to the prejudice of the public by individuals, that I must again repeat, that I am egregiously deceived if the people of this country are not in general extremely well affected to France. The prejudices against that kingdom had been so riveted by our English connexion and English policy, that it was some time before our people could get entirely the better of them. This, however, was thoroughly accomplished in the course of the war. And I may venture to say, that a greater revolution never took place in the sentiments of one people respecting another. Now, as none of their former attachments have been revived by Britain, and as no subject of uneasiness has turned up with respect to France, any disgust or enmity to the latter would involve a mystery beyond my comprehension. For I have always believed, that

some apparent cause, powerful in its nature and progressive in its operation, must be employed to produce a change in national sentiments. But no prejudice has been revived, no jealousy excited to my knowledge, which could have wrought a revolution unfriendly to your nation. If one or a few persons in New York have given a different specimen of thinking and acting, I rely too much upon your candor to apprehend, that you will impute it to the American people at large.

I am happy to learn, that your Excellency is meditating to strengthen the commercial ties that connect the two nations, and that your ideas of effecting it, by placing the arrangement upon the basis of mutual advantages, coincide exactly with my own. Treaties, which are not built upon reciprocal benefits, are not likely to be of long duration. Warmly as I wish to second your views, it is a subject of regret, that my little acquaintance with commercial affairs, and my seclusion from public life, have not put me in a state of preparation to answer your several questions with accuracy. I will endeavour to inform myself of the most interesting particulars, and shall take a pleasure in communicating the result.

At present I can only remark, that I think the taste for many articles of French merchandise is rather increasing. Still there are three circumstances, which are thought to give the British merchant an advantage over all others.

First, Their extensive credit, which, I confess, I wish to see abolished.

Secondly, Their having in one place magazines containing all kinds of articles, that can be required.

Thirdly, Their knowledge of the precise kinds of merchandise and fabrics which are wanted.

For my own part I could wish to see the time when

no credit should be given. Attention and experience in the American trade would enable the French merchants, I apprehend, to accommodate our markets in other respects. Between this country and England many causes of irritation exist, and it is not impossible that the ill policy of the British court may accelerate the removal of our trade into other channels. I am, &c.

TO HENRY KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 30 March, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 10th came duly to hand, and by Mr. Madison I had the pleasure to hear that you had recovered from a severe illness. On this event I sincerely congratulate you. The conduct of the State of New Hampshire has baffled all calculation, and has come extremely *malapropos* for a favorable decision on the proposed constitution in this State; for, be the real cause of the late adjournment what it may, the antifederal party with us do not scruple to pronounce, that it was done to await the issue of this convention before it would decide, and add, that, if this State should reject it, all those who are to follow will do the same, and consequently that it cannot obtain, as there will be only eight States in favor of the measure.

Had it not been for this untoward event, the opposition would have proved entirely unavailing in this State, notwithstanding the unfair (I might without much impropriety have made use of a harsher expression) conduct, which has been practised to rouse the fears and to inflame the minds of the people. What will be the result now, is not for me to say, as I have seen but a partial return of the delegates, and have little or no

knowledge of the political sentiments of many of them. In the northern part of the State the current of sentiment, I know, is generally in favor of the new form. In the southern part, I am told, it is the reverse. Pains have not been wanting to inculcate a belief, that the proposed general government will, without scruple or delay, barter away their right to the navigation of the Mississippi. The postponement in New Hampshire will give strength and vigor to the opposition in New York, and possibly render Rhode Island more tardy than she would otherwise have been, if all the New England States had adopted the measure. I am, &c.

TO JOHN LANGDON.

Mount Vernon, 2 April, 1788.

SIR,

Your letter of the 28th of February came regularly to hand. The conduct of New Hampshire respecting the proposed government was a matter of general surprise in this, and I believe in every other part of the United States; for her local situation, unconnected with other circumstances, was supposed to be a sufficient inducement to the people of that State to adopt a general government, which promises more energy and security than the one under which we have hitherto lived, and especially as it holds out advantages to the smaller States equal at least to their most sanguine expectations.

Circumstanced as your convention was, an adjournment was certainly prudent, but it happened very *malapropos* for this State, because the concurrent information from that quarter would have justified the expectation of a unanimity in the convention; whereas

an account so opposite to every former one, having arrived at the very time when the elections were carrying on here, gave an opportunity to the opponents of the proposed constitution to hold up to the people its not having been so generally approved of in other States as they had been taught to believe, and of consequence prepared them to receive other impressions unfriendly to the government and tending to influence their votes in favor of antifederal characters. However, I am still strong in the expectation of its being adopted here, notwithstanding the unjust and uncandid representations, which have been made by the opponents to inflame the minds of the people and prejudice them against it. I am, Sir, &c.

TO RICHARD BUTLER.

Mount Vernon, 3 April, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

My not acknowledging the reception of the printed vocabulary must have been an omission, for it came safely to hand with the manuscript one. Your observation respecting the instability and inefficacy of our general government is very just. They are not only apparent in the instance, which you mention, but have for a long time strongly marked all our national transactions. This, in my opinion, is a powerful argument for adopting the proposed constitution, even if it were less perfect than it is, and while a constitutional door is left open for amendments whenever they may be found necessary.

I thank you, my dear Sir, for your information respecting the opposition to the proposed government in the country west of the Susquehanna. Notwithstanding

the rancor and activity of the opponents in Pennsylvania, I trust that they are, generally speaking, persons of too little importance to endanger the general welfare of the Union by extending their influence to other States, or even any further in their own than to a few counties, or even persons whose characters, dispositions, and situations are conformable to theirs. I am, &c.

TO JAMES WILSON.

Mount Vernon, 4 April, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

You will please to accept my best thanks for the copy of the debates of your late convention,* which you have been so polite as to send me. That, together with your favor of the 11th ultimo, was handed to me by Mr. Madison. The violent proceedings of the enemies of the proposed constitution in your State are to be regretted, as disturbing the peace of society; but in any other point of view they are not to be regarded, for their unimportance effectually precludes any fear of their having an extensive or lasting influence, and their activity holds up to view the general cast and character of them, which need only to be seen to be disregarded.

It is impossible to say, with any degree of certainty, what will be the determination of the convention in this State upon the proposed plan of government. I have no opportunity of gaining information respecting the matter, but what comes through the medium of the newspapers, or from those gentlemen who visit me, as I have hardly been ten miles from my farm since my return from Philadelphia. Some judgment may be

---

* In Pennsylvania.

formed when the members chosen by the several counties to serve in convention are known; as their sentiments will be decided, and their choice determined, by their attachment or opposition to the proposed system. A majority of those names I have yet seen are said to be friendly to the constitution; but these are from the northern parts of the State, from whence least opposition was to be expected. It is, however, certain, that there will be a greater weight of abilities opposed to it here than in any other State. I am, &c.

TO CHARLES LEE.

Mount Vernon, 4 April, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I am very sorry I have not yet been able to discharge my account with the James River Company, for the amount of which you presented me with an order.

The almost total loss of my crop last year by the drought, which has obliged me to purchase upwards of eight hundred barrels of corn, and my other numerous and necessary demands for cash, when I find it impossible to obtain what is due to me by any means, have caused more perplexity and given me more uneasiness than I ever experienced before from the want of money. In addition to the disappointments, which I have met with from those who are indebted to me, I have in my hands a number of indents and other public securities, which I have received from time to time as the interest of some Continental loan-office certificates, which are in my possession. As I am so little conversant in public securities of every kind, as not to know the use or value of them, and hardly the difference of one kind from another, I have kept them

by me from year to year without having an idea that they would depreciate, as they were drawn for interest, and never doubting but they would be received in payment of taxes at any time, till I have found by the revenue law of the last session, that only a particular description of them will pay the taxes of the year 1787. The others pay all arrearages of taxes, and I am informed are not worth more than two shillings and sixpence in the pound. The injustice of this measure is too obvious and too glaring to pass unobserved. It is taxing the honest man for his punctuality, and rewarding the tardy or dishonest with the sum of seventeen shillings and sixpence in every pound which is due from him for taxes.

Should it fall in your way, I should be glad to know, what is likely to be the final result of my holding the certificates, which have been given to me for interest of the money I lent to the public in the day of its distress. I am well apprized, that these are negotiable things, and when a person is obliged to part with them, he must, as with other commodities at market, take what they will fetch; but the object of my inquiry is to know, what the final end of them will be if retained in my chest. Strange indeed it seems, that the public officers should take in the original certificates, issue new by a scale of their own, reducing the money, as they say, to specie value, give warrants for interest accordingly, and then, behold! these specie warrants are worth two shillings and sixpence in the pound. To commit them to the flames, or suffer this, is a matter of indifference to me. There can be no justice, where there are such practices. You will pardon me for dwelling so long upon this subject. It is a matter, which does not concern me alone, but must affect many others. With great esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO THOMAS JOHNSON.

Mount Vernon, 20 April, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

As well from report, as from the ideas expressed to me in your letter of December last, I am led to conclude, that you are disposed, circumstanced as our public affairs are at present, to ratify the constitution, which has been submitted to the people by the federal convention; and, under this impression, I take the liberty of expressing a single sentiment on the occasion. It is, that an adjournment of your convention,* if attempted, to a later period than the decision of the question in this State, will be tantamount to the rejection of the constitution. I have good reasons for this opinion, and I am told it is the blow, which the leading characters of the opposition in the next State have meditated,† if it shall be found that a direct attack is not likely to succeed in yours. If this be true, it cannot be too much deprecated and guarded against. The postponement in New Hampshire, although it had no reference to the convention of this State, but proceeded altogether from the local circumstances of its own, is ascribed by the opposition here to complaisance towards Virginia, and great use is made of it. An event similar to this in Maryland would have the worst tendency imaginable; for indecision there would certainly have considerable influence upon South Carolina, the only other State, which is to precede Virginia, and submits the question almost wholly to the determination of the latter. The pride of the State is already touched

* The convention in the State of Maryland.

† That is, the next in which a convention shall assemble after that of Maryland.

upon this string, and will be raised much higher if there is fresh cause.

The sentiments of Kentucky are not yet known here. Independent of these, the parties in this State, from the known or presumed opinions of the members, are pretty equally balanced. The one in favor of the constitution preponderates at present; but a little matter, cast into the opposite scale, may make it heaviest.

If, in suggesting these hints, I have exceeded the proper limit, I shall yet hope to be excused. I have but one public wish remaining. It is, that in peace and retirement I may see this country rescued from the danger that is pending, and rise into respectability, maugre the intrigues of its public and private enemies. I am, with very great esteem and regard, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE CHASTELLUX.

Mount Vernon, 25 April, 1788.

My dear Marquis,

In reading your very friendly and acceptable letter, which came to hand by the last mail, I was, as you may well suppose, not less delighted than surprised to meet the plain American words, "my wife." A wife! Well, my dear Marquis, I can hardly refrain from smiling to find you are caught at last. I saw, by the eulogium you often made on the happiness of domestic *life in* America, that you had swallowed the bait, and that you would as surely be taken, one day or another, as that you were a philosopher and a soldier. So your day has at length come. I am glad of it, with all my heart and soul. It is quite good enough for you. Now you are well served for coming to fight in favor of the American rebels, all the way across the Atlantic Ocean,

by catching that terrible contagion, domestic felicity, which, like the smallpox or the plague, a man can have only once in his life, because it commonly lasts him, (at least with us in America; I know not how you manage these matters in France,) for his whole lifetime. And yet, after all, the worst wish, which I can find in my heart to make against Madame de Chastellux and yourself, is, that you may neither of you ever get the better of this same domestic felicity, during the entire course of your mortal existence.

If so wonderful an event should have occasioned me, my dear Marquis, to write in a strange style, you will understand me as clearly as if I had said, what in plain English is the simple truth, "Do me the justice to believe, that I take a heartfelt interest in whatsoever concerns your happiness." And, in this view, I sincerely congratulate you on your auspicious matrimonial connexion. I am happy to find, that Madame de Chastellux is so intimately connected with the Duchess of Orleans; as I have always understood, that this noble lady was an illustrious example of connubial love, as well as an excellent pattern of virtue in general.

While you have been making love under the banner of Hymen, the great personages in the north have been making war under the inspiration, or rather under the infatuation, of Mars. Now, for my part, I humbly conceive, that you have acted much the best and wisest part; for certainly it is more consonant to all the principles of reason and religion, natural and revealed, to replenish the earth with inhabitants, than to depopulate it by killing those already in existence. Besides, it is time for the age of knight-errantry and mad heroism to be at an end. Your young military men, who want to reap the harvest of laurels, do not care, I suppose, how many seeds of war are sown; but for the sake of

humanity it is devoutly to be wished, that the manly employment of agriculture, and the humanizing benefits of commerce, would supersede the waste of war and the rage of conquest; that the swords might be turned into ploughshares, the spears into pruninghooks, and, as the Scriptures express it, "the nations learn war no more."

Now I will give you a little news from this side of the water, and then finish. As for us, we are plodding on in the dull road of peace and politics. We, who live in these ends of the earth, only hear of the rumors of war like the roar of distant thunder. It is to be hoped, that our remote local situation will prevent us from being swept into its vortex.

The constitution, which was proposed by the federal convention, has been adopted by the States of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Georgia. No State has rejected it. The convention of Maryland is now sitting, and will probably adopt it; as that of South Carolina is expected to do in May. The other conventions will assemble early in the summer. Hitherto there has been much greater unanimity in favor of the proposed government, than could have reasonably been expected. Should it be adopted, and I think it will be, America will lift up her head again, and in a few years become respectable among the nations. It is a flattering and consolatory reflection, that our rising republics have the good wishes of all the philosophers, patriots, and virtuous men in all nations; and that they look upon them as a kind of asylum for mankind. God grant that we may not disappoint their honest expectations by our folly or perverseness.

With sentiments of the purest attachment and esteem, I have the honor to be, my dear Marquis, &c.

P. S. If the Duc de Lauzun is still with you, I beg you will thank him, in my name, for his kind remembrance of me, and make my compliments to him.

May 1st. — Since writing the above, I have been favored with a duplicate of your letter in the handwriting of a lady, and cannot close this without acknowledging my obligations for the flattering postscript of the fair transcriber. In effect, my dear Marquis, the characters of this interpreter of your sentiments are so much fairer than those, through which I have been accustomed to decipher them, that I already consider myself as no small gainer by your matrimonial connexion; especially as I hope your amiable amanuensis will not forget sometimes to add a few annotations of her own to your original text.

TO JOHN ARMSTRONG.

Mount Vernon, 25 April, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

From some cause or other, which I do not know, your favor of the 20th of February did not reach me till very lately. This must apologize for its not being sooner acknowledged. Although Colonel Blaine forgot to call upon me for a letter before he left Philadelphia, yet I wrote a few lines to you previous to my departure from that place; whether they ever got to your hands, you best know.

I well remember the observation you made in your letter to me of last year, "that my domestic retirement must suffer an interruption." This took place, notwithstanding it was utterly repugnant to my feelings, my interest, and my wishes. I sacrificed every private consideration, and personal enjoyment, to the earnest

and pressing solicitations of those, who saw and knew the alarming situation of our public concerns, and had no other end in view but to promote the interests of their country; conceiving, that under those circumstances, and at so critical a moment, an absolute refusal to act might on my part be construed as a total disregard of my country, if imputed to no worse motives. Although you say the same motives induce you to think, that another tour of duty of this kind will fall to my lot, I cannot but hope, that you will be disappointed; for I am so wedded to a state of retirement, and find the occupations of a rural life so congenial with my feelings, that to be drawn into public at my advanced age would be a sacrifice, that would admit of no compensation.*

Your remarks on the impressions, which will be made on the manners and sentiments of the people by the example of those, who are first called to act under the proposed government, are very just; and I

* *From General Armstrong's Letter.* — "Old as I am, I rejoice at the high probability, and therefore near prospect, of a general adoption of the federal constitution. This hope leads us on to the use of that system, in which the federal voice of Pennsylvania stands ready to announce your Excellency the first president of the Union. In this there needs be little hesitation amongst the citizens, but not so with you. Persuaded as I am it will cost you much anxious thought, nevertheless, if the call of God is manifested to you in a plenary or unanimous call of the people, I hope that will obviate every objection; if not for the whole term of four years, at least for half that time, if health admit; considering, as you will, that we were not made for ourselves, therefore must not live to ourselves. My sole reason for these early hints is, that by a divine blessing you may be made instrumental in giving a wise and useful *example to successors*, in more things than what may be merely essential to the office. I had like to be so imprudent as to mention a few, but am checked, not by modesty alone, but by former demonstration, that you will have in full view all I mean and much more. The more dissipated customs of the age, prompted by elevation of rank, national dignity, and other inflated ideas, will but too probably contrast themselves to national economy, real dignity, and private virtue too." — *Carlisle, February 20th.*

have no doubt but, if the proposed constitution obtains, those persons who are chosen to administer it will have wisdom enough to discern the influence, which their examples as rulers and legislators may have on the body of the people, and will have virtue enough to pursue that line of conduct, which will most conduce to the happiness of their country. As the first transactions of a nation, like those of an individual upon his first entrance into life, make the deepest impression, and are to form the leading traits in his character, they will undoubtedly pursue those measures, which will best tend to the restoration of public and private faith, and of consequence promote our national respectability and individual welfare.

That the proposed constitution will admit of amendments is acknowledged by its warmest advocates; but to make such amendments as may be proposed by the several States the condition of its adoption would, in my opinion, amount to a complete rejection of it; for, upon examination of the objections, which are made by the opponents in different States, and the amendments, which have been proposed, it will be found, that what would be a favorite object with one State, is the very thing which is strenuously opposed by another. The truth is, men are too apt to be swayed by local prejudices, and those, who are so fond of amendments, which have the particular interest of their own State in view, cannot extend their ideas to the general welfare of the Union. They do not consider, that, for every sacrifice which they make, they receive an ample compensation by the sacrifices, which are made by other States for their benefit; and that those very things, which they give up, operate to their advantage through the medium of the great interest.

In addition to these considerations it should be re-

membered, that a constitutional door is opened for such amendments, as shall be thought necessary by nine States. When I reflect upon these circumstances, I am surprised to find, that any person, who is acquainted with the critical state of our public affairs, and knows the variety of views, interests, feelings, and prejudices, which must be consulted in framing a general government for these States, and how little propositions in themselves so opposite to each other will tend to promote that desirable end, can wish to make amendments the *ultimatum* for adopting the offered system.

I am very glad to find, that the opposition in your State, however formidable it has been represented, is generally speaking composed of such characters, as cannot have an extensive influence. Their strength, as well as that of those of the same class in other States, seems to lie in misrepresentation, and a desire to inflame the passions and to alarm the fears by noisy declamation, rather than to convince the understanding by sound arguments or fair and impartial statements. Baffled in their attacks upon the constitution, they have attempted to vilify and debase the characters, who formed it; but even here I trust they will not succeed. Upon the whole, I doubt whether the opposition to the constitution will not ultimately be productive of more good than evil. It has called forth in its defence abilities, which would not perhaps have been otherwise exerted, that have thrown new light upon the science of government. It has given the rights of man a full and fair discussion, and explained them in so clear and forcible a manner, as cannot fail to make a lasting impression upon those, who read the best publications on the subject, and particularly the pieces under the signature of PUBLIUS. There will be a greater weight of abilities opposed to the system in the convention of this

State, than there has been in any other; but, notwithstanding the unwearied pains which have been taken, and the vigorous efforts which will be made in the convention to prevent its adoption, I have not the smallest doubt but it will obtain here.

I am sorry to hear, that the college in your neighbourhood* is in so declining a state as you represent it, and that it is likely to suffer a further injury by the loss of Dr. Nisbet, whom you are afraid you shall not be able to support in a proper manner, on account of the scarcity of cash, which prevents parents from sending their children thither. This is one of the numerous evils, which arise from the want of a general regulating power; for in a country like this, where equal liberty is enjoyed, where every man may reap his own harvest, which by proper attention will afford him much more than is necessary for his own consumption, and where there is so ample a field for every mercantile and mechanical exertion, if there cannot be money found to answer the common purposes of education, not to mention the necessary commercial circulation, it is evident that there is something amiss in the ruling political power, which requires a steady, regulating, and energetic hand to correct and control it. That money is not to be had, every man's experience tells him, and the great fall in the price of property is an unequivocal and melancholy proof of it; when, if that property were well secured, faith and justice well preserved, a stable government well administered, and confidence restored, the tide of population and wealth would flow to us from every part of the globe, and, with a due sense of the blessing, make us the happiest people upon earth. With sentiments of very great esteem and regard, I am, my dear Sir, &c.

* Dickinson College at Carlisle in Pennsylvania.

TO JOHN VAUGHAN.

Mount Vernon, 27 April, 1788.

SIR,

I have received your two letters of the 17th and 21st instant, and the papers containing the four numbers of FABIUS, which accompanied them.

I must beg you to accept my best thanks for your polite attention in forwarding those papers to me. The writer of the pieces signed FABIUS, whoever he is, appears to be master of his subject. He treats it with dignity, and at the same time expresses himself in such a manner as to render it intelligible to every capacity. I have no doubt but that an extensive republication of them would be of utility in removing those impressions, which have been made upon the minds of many by an unfair or partial representation of the proposed constitution, and would afford desirable information upon the subject to those who seek for it.* I am happy to hear of your father's safe arrival at Jamaica. You will please to tender my regards to him whenever you write. I am, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 28 April, 1788.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

The frequency of your kind remembrance of me, and your endearing expressions of attachment, are by

* These letters were written by John Dickinson, and first published separately in the newspapers. They were designed to confute the objections to the new constitution, and entered deeply into a discussion of the principles of free governments, and the best modes of establishing a confederation of independent States. The whole series extended to nine letters, which were collected and printed in the second volume of JOHN DICKINSON'S *Political Writings*.

so much the more satisfactory, as I recognise them to be a counterpart of my own feelings for you. In truth, you know I speak the language of sincerity, and not of flattery, when I tell you, that your letters are ever most welcome and dear to me.

This I design to be a letter of politics. We are looking anxiously across the Atlantic for news, and you are looking anxiously back again for the same purpose. It is an interesting subject to contemplate how far the war, kindled in the north of Europe, may extend its conflagrations, and what may be the result before its extinction. The Turk appears to have lost his old and acquired a new connexion. Whether England has not, in the hour of her pride, overacted her part, and pushed matters too far for her own interest, time will discover; but, in my opinion, though from my distance and want of minute information I should form it with diffidence, the affairs of that nation cannot long go on in the same prosperous train. In spite of expedients, and in spite of resources, the paper bubble will one day burst, and it will whelm many in the ruins. I hope the affairs of France are gradually sliding into a better state. Good effects may, and I trust will ensue, without any convulsion. France, were her resources properly managed, and her administration wisely conducted, is, as you justly observe, much more potent in the scale of empire, than her rivals at present seem inclined to believe.

I notice with pleasure the additional immunities and facilities in trade, which France has granted to the United States by the late royal *arrêt*. I flatter myself it will have the desired effect in some measure of augmenting the commercial intercourse. From the productions and wants of the two countries, their trade with each other is certainly capable of great ameliora-

tion. Whenever we shall have an efficient government established, that government will surely impose retaliating restrictions, to a certain degree, upon the trade of Britain. At present, or under our existing form of confederation, it would be idle to think of making commercial regulations on our part. One State passes a prohibitory law respecting some article, another State opens wide the avenue for its admission. One Assembly makes a system, another Assembly unmakes it. Virginia, in the very last session of her legislature, was about to pass some of the most extravagant and preposterous edicts on the subject of trade, that ever stained the leaves of a legislative code. It is in vain to hope for a remedy of these, and innumerable other evils, until a general government shall be adopted.

The conventions of six States only have as yet accepted the new constitution. No one has rejected it. It is believed that the convention of Maryland, which is now in session, and that of South Carolina, which is to assemble on the 12th of May, will certainly adopt it. Since the elections of members for the convention have taken place in this State, it is also more generally believed, that it will be adopted here, than it was before those elections were made. There will, however, be powerful and eloquent speeches on both sides of the question in the Virginia convention; but, as Pendleton, Wythe, Blair, Madison, Jones, Nicholas, Innes, and many other of our first characters, will be advocates for its adoption, you may suppose the weight of abilities will rest on that side. Henry and Mason are its great adversaries. The governor, if he opposes it at all, will do it feebly.

On the general merits of this proposed constitution, I wrote to you some time ago my sentiments pretty

freely. That letter had not been received by you, when you addressed to me the last of yours, which has come to my hands. I had never supposed that perfection could be the result of accommodation and mutual concession. The opinion of Mr. Jefferson and yourself is certainly a wise one, that the constitution ought by all means to be accepted by nine States before any attempt should be made to procure amendments; for, if that acceptance shall not previously take place, men's minds will be so much agitated and soured, that the danger will be greater than ever of our becoming a disunited people. Whereas, on the other hand, with prudence in temper and a spirit of moderation, every essential alteration may in the process of time be expected.

You will doubtless have seen, that it was owing to this conciliatory and patriotic principle, that the convention of Massachusetts adopted the constitution *in toto*, but recommended a number of specific alterations, as an early, serious, and unremitting subject of attention. Now, although it is not to be expected, that every individual in society will or can ever be brought to agree upon what is exactly the best form of government, yet there are many things in the constitution, which only need to be explained, in order to prove equally satisfactory to all parties. For example, there was not a member of the convention, I believe, who had the least objection to what is contended for by the advocates for a *Bill of Rights*, and *Trial by Jury*. The first, where the people evidently retained every thing, which they did not in express terms give up, was considered nugatory, as you will find to have been more fully explained by Mr. Wilson and others; and, as to the second, it was only the difficulty of establishing a mode, which should not interfere with the fixed modes of any

of the States, that induced the convention to leave it as a matter of future adjustment.

There are other points in which opinions would be more likely to vary. As for instance, on the ineligibility of the same person for president, after he should have served a certain course of years. Guarded so effectually as the proposed constitution is, in respect to the prevention of bribery and undue influence in the choice of president, I confess I differ widely myself from Mr. Jefferson and you, as to the expediency or necessity of rotation in that appointment. The matter was fairly discussed in the convention, and to my full conviction, though I cannot have time or room to sum up the arguments in this letter. There cannot in my judgment be the least danger, that the president will by any practicable intrigue ever be able to continue himself one moment in office, much less to perpetuate himself in it, but in the last stage of corrupted morals and political depravity; and even then, there is as much danger that any other species of domination would prevail. Though, when a people shall have become incapable of governing themselves, and fit for a master, it is of little consequence from what quarter he comes. Under an extended view of this part of the subject, I can see no propriety in precluding ourselves from the services of any man, who on some great emergency shall be deemed universally most capable of serving the public.

In answer to the observations you make on the probability of my election to the presidency, knowing me as you do, I need only say, that it has no enticing charms and no fascinating allurements for me. However, it might not be decent for me to say I would refuse to accept, or even to speak much about an appointment, which may never take place; for, in so do-

ing, one might possibly incur the application of the moral resulting from that fable, in which the fox is represented as inveighing against the sourness of the grapes, because he could not reach them. All that it will be necessary to add, my dear Marquis, in order to show my decided predilection is, that, at my time of life and under my circumstances, the increasing infirmities of nature and the growing love of retirement do not permit me to entertain a wish beyond that of living and dying an honest man on my own farm. Let those follow the pursuits of ambition and fame, who have a keener relish for them, or who may have more years in store for the enjoyment.

Mrs. Washington, while she requests that her best compliments may be presented to you, joins with me in soliciting that the same friendly and affectionate memorial of our constant remembrance and good wishes may be made acceptable to Madame de Lafayette and the little ones. I am, &c.

TO COUNT DE ROCHAMBEAU.

Mount Vernon, 28 April, 1788.

MY DEAR COUNT,

I have just received the letter, which you did me the honor to write to me on the 18th of January; and am sorry to learn, that the Count de Grasse, our gallant coadjutor in the capture of Cornwallis, is no more. Yet his death is not, perhaps, so much to be deplored as his latter days were to be pitied. It seemed as if an unfortunate and unrelenting destiny pursued him, to destroy the enjoyment of all earthly comfort. The disastrous battle of the 12th of April, the loss of the favor of his King, and the subsequent connexion in marriage

with an unworthy woman, were sufficient to have made him weary of the burden of life. Your goodness in endeavouring to sweeten its passage was truly commendable, however it might have been marred by his own impetuosity. But his frailties should now be buried in the grave with him, while his name will be long deservedly dear to this country, on account of his successful coöperation in the glorious campaign of 1781. The Cincinnati in some of the States have gone into mourning for him.

Although your nation and England have avoided, from prudential motives, going into a war, yet I fancy their affections have not been much increased by the affair in Holland. The feeling occasioned to France, by the interference of Prussia and Britain, may not pass away altogether without consequences. I wish indeed the affairs of France to be on a footing, which would enable her to be the arbiter of peace to the neighbouring nations. The poor Dutch patriots seem, by some means or other, to have been left sadly in the lurch, and to be reduced to a most humiliating condition. As if the two powers, who reinstated the Stadtholder, had not done enough to set the middle nations together by the ears, they have embroiled all the north of Europe by bringing the Turks into hostility with the two imperial courts. Should France join with the latter, or even should she continue neutral, I can scarcely conceive that the Turks will be permitted to hold any of their possessions in Europe. The torch of hostility being once kindled, the flame commonly spreads apace; but it is beyond my prescience to foretell how far this flame will extend itself, before it shall be entirely extinguished.

Here, in America, we have not much news worth the trouble of communicating to you, my dear Count,

though I know that often what is to ourselves matter of indifference, is to our friends at a distance a subject of curiosity. For that reason I will subjoin in one word a state of affairs on this side of the water. All the public attention has been, for many months past, engrossed by a new constitution. It has met with some opposition from men of abilities, but it has been much more ably advocated. Six States have accepted it. The opinion is, that Maryland and South Carolina will soon do the same. One more State only will be wanting to put the government into execution. And as the other conventions are to meet early in the summer, we hope for the best. As to the intimation, which your partiality for me has prompted you to make on my behalf, I need only say, that every body knows that private life is my decided choice in preference to any thing the world can bestow. I am, &c.

TO SAMUEL GRIFFIN.

Mount Vernon, 30 April, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I am now to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th of April, in which you did me the favor to enclose an extract from the original statute, designating the duties of the office to which I had been appointed.*

* It has been seen by General Washington's letter of the 20th of February, that he declined accepting the chancellorship of the College of William and Mary, till he should know the duties belonging to the office. To satisfy his scruples on this head, Mr. Griffin sent to him an extract from the statute respecting the duties of the Chancellor, which runs thus. "The Chancellor is to be the Mæcenas, or patron of the college, such a one as by his favor with the King, and by his interest with all other persons in England, may be enabled to help on all the college af-

Influenced by a heartfelt desire to promote the cause of science in general, and the prosperity of the College of William and Mary in particular, I accept the office of chancellor in the same; and request you will be pleased to give official notice thereof to the learned body, who have thought proper to honor me with the appointment. I confide fully in their strenuous endeavours for placing the system of education on such a basis, as will render it most beneficial to the State and the republic of letters, as well as to the more extensive interests of humanity and religion. In return, they will do me the justice to believe, that I shall not be tardy in giving my cheerful concurrence to such measures, as may be best calculated for the attainment of those desirable and important objects. For the expressions of politeness and friendship blended with your communications, you are desired to receive my best acknowledgments. I am, dear Sir, &c.

---

fairs. His advice is to be taken, especially in all such arduous and momentous affairs, as the college shall have to do in England. If the college has any petitions at any time to the King, let them be presented by their Chancellor. If the college wants a new president, or professor, or master, let the college senate rely chiefly on his assistance, advice, and recommendation." Mr. Griffin added, that neither an oath, nor personal attendance, was necessary. The Bishop of London had been the last Chancellor. He was accustomed to send over professors and teachers; and applications either to the King or Parliament were made through him. These duties being done away by the revolution, little else than the name and dignity of the office remained; and, as Washington was pressed anew by the trustees of the college, he concluded to accept the appointment, adhering to his invariable maxim never to receive an office, nor take upon himself the responsibility of a charge, the duties of which he did not think both his leisure and qualifications would enable him faithfully to execute.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 2 May, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I can now with pleasure inform you, that the State of Maryland adopted the proposed constitution last Monday by a very great majority. This you will undoubtedly have announced by the public papers before this letter reaches you; but that State will not receive the sole benefit of its adoption; it will have a very considerable influence upon the decision in Virginia, for it has been strongly insisted upon by the opponents in the lower and back counties in this State, that Maryland would reject it by a large majority. The result being found so directly opposite to this assertion will operate very powerfully upon the sentiments of many, who were before undecided, and will tend to fix them in favor of the constitution. It will, if I am not misinformed, have this effect upon many, who are chosen to the convention, and who have depended in a great measure upon the determination of Maryland to confirm their opinion. But exclusive of this influence the most accurate returns of the members of the convention, with their sentiments annexed so far as they were known, gave a decided majority in favor of the constitution, and the prevailing opinion is, that it gains advocates daily. I never have, for my own part, once doubted of its adoption here; and, if I have at any time been wavering in my opinion, the present appearances and concurrent information would have completely fixed it.

I am very sorry to find by your letter, that there is so much of the spirit of insurrection yet remaining in your State, and that it discovered itself so strongly in your Assembly; but I hope the influence of those gen-

tlemen, who are friendly to the proposed constitution, and the conciliatory disposition, which was shown by many of the minority in your convention, will so far pervade the States as to prevent that factious spirit from gaining ground. With sentiments of the highest esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO JOHN ETTWEIN.*

Mount Vernon, 2 May, 1788.

REVEREND SIR,

I have received your obliging letter of the 28th of March, enclosing a copy of some remarks † on the customs and languages of the Indians, and a printed pamphlet containing the stated rules of a Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen, for which tokens of polite attention and kind remembrance I must beg you to accept my best thanks.

So far as I am capable of judging, the principles upon which the Society is founded, and the rules laid down for its government, appear to be well calculated to promote so laudable and arduous an undertaking; and you will permit me to add, that, if an event so long and so earnestly desired as that of converting the Indians to Christianity, and consequently to civilization, can be effected, the Society of Bethlehem bids fair to bear a very considerable part in it. I am, Reverend Sir, with sentiments of esteem, &c.

---

* A clergyman of the Moravian persuasion at Bethlehem in Pennsylvania.

† A curious tract in manuscript, entitled, "Remarks and Observations concerning the Traditions, Customs, and Languages of the Indians in North America, from the Memoirs of the Reverend David Zeisberger, and other Missionaries of the United Brethren."

TO GEORGE S. WASHINGTON.*

Mount Vernon, 5 May, 1788.

DEAR GEORGE,

I yesterday received a letter from Mr. Hanson, informing me that you slept from home three nights successively, and one contrary to his express prohibition. Complaints of this nature are extremely painful to me, as it discovers a degree of impropriety in your conduct, which, at your time of life, your good sense and discretion ought to point out to you, and lead you to avoid. Although there is nothing criminal in your having slept with a companion of good manners and reputation, as you say you have, yet your absenting yourself from your own lodgings under that pretence may be productive of irregularities and disagreeable consequences; and I now insist upon it in the most pointed terms, that you do not repeat it without the consent and approbation of Mr. Hanson.

One strong motive for my placing you in your present lodgings was, that you might, in your conduct out of school, be guided by Mr. Hanson's advice and directions, as I confide very much in his discretion, and that he would require nothing of you but what will conduce to your advantage; and, at the age to which you have now arrived, you must be capable of distinguishing between a proper and improper line of conduct, and be sensible of the advantages or disadvantages which will result to you through life from the one or the other.

Your future character and reputation will depend very much, if not entirely, upon the habits and manners, which you contract in the present period of your

* A nephew of General Washington, whom, with a brother, he had taken under his charge. They were at school in Alexandria.

life. They will make an impression upon you, which can never be effaced. You should therefore be extremely cautious how you put yourself into the way of imbibing those customs, which may tend to corrupt your manners or vitiate your heart. I do not write to you in this style from knowing or suspecting that you are addicted to any vice, but only to guard you against pursuing a line of conduct, which may imperceptibly lead to vicious courses. Mr. Hanson has done you and Lawrence justice in saying, that your behaviour since you have been last with him has been unexceptionable except in this instance, and one more which he has not mentioned; and I hope this is the last complaint I shall ever hear, while you remain in your present situation at least, as it will prevent me from using means to regulate your behaviour, which will be unpleasant to us both. I am your sincere friend and affectionate uncle.*

TO JOHN JAY.

Mount Vernon, 15 May, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I am indebted to you for your favors of the 20th and 24th ultimo, and thank you for your care of my foreign letters. I do the same for the pamphlet you

---

* He wrote at the same time to Mr. Hanson as follows. "I am sorry that the conduct of one of my nephews has been such, as to render a complaint to me necessary, but I am extremely obliged to you for the communication. George has now advanced to that time of life, when it is absolutely necessary, that his conduct should be regulated by some means or other. Coercion would be extremely painful to me; but, if advice, remonstrance, and gentle methods will not answer the purpose, others must be taken. Enclosed is a letter to him, which I have left open for your perusal." — *May 5th.*

were so obliging as to send me. The good sense, forcible observations, temper, and moderation, with which it is written, cannot fail, I should think, of making a serious impression, even upon the antifederal mind, where it is not under the influence of such local views as will yield to no argument, no proofs. If you could conveniently furnish me with another of these pamphlets I would thank you, having sent the last to a friend of mine.*

Since the elections in this State, little doubt is entertained of the adoption of the proposed constitution with us, if no mistake has been made with respect to the sentiments of the Kentucky members. The opponents to it, I am informed, are now also of this opinion. Their grand manœuvres were exhibited at the elections, and some of them, if reports be true, were not much to their credit. Failing in their attempt to exclude the friends to the new government from the convention, and baffled in their exertions to effect an adjournment in Maryland, they have become more passive of late. Should South Carolina, now in session, decide favorably, and the government thereby (nine States having acceded) get in motion, I can scarcely conceive that any one of the remainder, or all of them together, were they to convene for the purpose of deliberation, separated from each other as they then would be in a geographical point of view, would incline to withdraw from the union of the other nine.

I have the honor to be, &c.

---

* *From Mr. Jay's Letter.* — "The constitution still continues to cause great party zeal and ferment, and the opposition is yet so formidable, that the issue appears problematical. I enclose the latest publication of any consequence that we have on the subject." — *April 20th.*

TO FRANCIS ADRIAN VANDERKEMP.

Mount Vernon, 28 May, 1788.

SIR,

The letter, which you did me the favor to address to me on the 15th of May from New York, has been duly received, and I take the speediest occasion to welcome your arrival on the American shore. I had always hoped, that this land might become a safe and agreeable asylum to the virtuous and persecuted part of mankind, to whatever nation they might belong; but I shall be more particularly happy, if this country can be by any means useful to the patriots of Holland, with whose situation I am peculiarly touched, and of whose public virtue I entertain a high opinion.

You may rest assured, Sir, of my best and most friendly sentiments for your suffering compatriots; and that, while I deplore the calamities to which many of the most worthy members of your community have been reduced by the late foreign interposition in the interior affairs of the United Netherlands, I shall flatter myself that many of them will be able, with the wrecks of their fortunes which may have escaped the extensive devastation, to settle themselves in comfort, freedom, and ease in some corner of the vast regions of America. The spirit of the religious and political institutions of this country must be an inducement under a good government, which I have no doubt we shall establish. This country certainly promises greater advantages than almost any other to persons of moderate property, who are determined to be sober, industrious, and virtuous members of society. And it must not be concealed, that a knowledge that these are the general characteristics of your compatriots would be a principal reason for considering them as a valuable acqui-

sition to our infant settlements. If you should meet with as favorable circumstances, as I hope will attend your first operations, I think it probable that your coming will be an inducement for many more to adventure across the Atlantic.

In the mean time give me leave to request, that I may have the pleasure to see you at my house whenever it may be convenient to you, and to offer whatsoever services it may be in my power to afford yourself, as well as to the other patriots, and friends to the rights of mankind, of the Dutch nation. I am, Sir, with sentiments of great esteem and respect, &c.*

TO JAMES MADISON.

Mount Vernon, 8 June, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am much obliged by the few lines you wrote to me on the 4th; and though it is yet too soon to re-

* *From Mr. Vanderkemp's Letter.* — "Being honored with a recommendatory letter of the Marquis de Lafayette to your Excellency, in view to assist my endeavours to settle in this commonwealth, with my wife and two children, who followed their husband and father from the unhappy Netherlands, I thought it my duty to send that letter to your Excellency as soon as possible. Although I lost the greatest part of my fortune in the defence of the rights of the inhabitants of a country heretofore my fellow-citizens, now subdued by an unlawful power with the assistance of two mighty foreign allies, I flatter myself with the hope, that it will be sufficient to procure me and my family an honest subsistence in some part of America, if my unremitted endeavours are blessed by Providence. As I have no larger views formed than to subsist, and to enjoy that independence, which belongs to a member of a free state, I think it will be so. I have been personally acquainted for several years with Mr. John Adams. He can inform your Excellency of my character, and of what I have done. If I am happy enough to be honored, by length of time, with your Excellency's approbation, and to enjoy for the present your advice, this will give a new increase to my contentment." — *New York, May 15th.*

joice, one cannot avoid being pleased at the auspicious opening of the business of your convention.* Though an ulterior opinion of the decision of this State on the constitution would, at any time previous to the discussion of it in the convention, have been premature, yet I have never despaired of its adoption here. What I have mostly apprehended is, that the insidious arts of its opposers may have produced instructions to the delegates, that would shut the door against argument, and be a bar to reason. If this is not the case, I have no doubt but that the good sense of this country will prevail against the local views of designing characters, and the arrogant opinions of chagrined and disappointed men.

The decision of Maryland and South Carolina by so large majorities, and the almost certain adoption of the proposed constitution by New Hampshire, will make all, except desperate men, look before they leap. The ratification by eight States without a negative, by three of them unanimously, by six against one in another, by three to one in another, by two to one in two more,

* *From Mr. Madison's Letter.* — "I found, contrary to my expectation, that not only a very full House had been made on the first day, but that it had proceeded to the appointment of the president and other officers. Mr. Pendleton was put into the chair without opposition. Yesterday little more was done, than settling some forms, and resolving that no question, general or particular, should be propounded, till the whole plan should be considered and debated clause by clause. This was moved by Colonel Mason, and, contrary to his expectations, concurred in by the other side. To-day the discussions commenced in committee of the whole. The governor has declared the day of previous amendments passed, and thrown himself fully into the federal scale. Henry and Mason made a lame figure, and appeared to take different and awkward grounds. The federalists are a good deal elated by the existing prospect. I dare not, however, speak with certainty as to the decision. Kentucky has been extremely tainted, is supposed to be generally adverse, and every kind of address is going on privately to work on the local interests and prejudices of that and other quarters." — *Richmond, June 4th.*

and by all the weight of abilities and property in the other, is enough, one would think, to produce a cessation of opposition. I do not mean, that this alone is sufficient to produce conviction in the mind, but I think it ought to produce some change in the conduct of any man, who distrusts his infallibility.

Although I have little doubt of your having received a copy of the enclosed pamphlet, I send it. It is written with much good sense and moderation. I conjecture, but upon no certain ground, that Mr. Jay is the author of it. He sent it to me some time ago, since which I have received two or three more copies.

With sincere esteem and affectionate regard, I am ever yours.*

---

* Scarcely had the new constitution been adopted by such a number of States, as to afford a probability of its success, before General Washington received intimations from many of his correspondents, that he must be prepared to accede to the wishes of the people in accepting the office of the first president. Some persons even went so far as to venture premature and ill-timed solicitations. To an application of this sort from a gentleman of respectable character and talents, who assigned his wants as a reason for his importunity, he sent the following characteristic answer.

"Your letter is now before me, and requires that I should say something in reply on a subject, in which I feel myself more embarrassed, and more awkwardly situated, than ever I have been before. It is but justice to my own feelings to observe, that I am conscious I have never been indisposed to do whatever might be in my power in favor of those, whose misfortunes had been unavoidably brought upon them without any fault of their own. In this predicament I was not a little concerned at an application for employment under a government which does not yet exist, and with the administration of which (in case it should be adopted and carried into execution) it is much more than possible I may never be concerned. The chaos of uncertainty in which we are involved, and the impropriety of my anticipating events, or hazarding opinions, would scarcely permit me to touch, however slightly, on these delicate topics.

"These circumstances, I observe, had not entirely escaped your attention; you will not, therefore, think it hard that I should mention the subject as peculiarly distressing and perplexing to me. Delicacy forbids, that I should enlarge as to myself. As to you I will only add, that I know

TO JOHN JAY.

Mount Vernon, 8 June, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

By the last mail I had the pleasure to receive your letter of the 29th of May, and have now the satisfaction to congratulate you on the adoption of the constitution by the convention of South Carolina. I am sorry to learn, that there is a probability that the majority of members in the New York convention will be antifederalists. Still I hope, that some event may turn up before they assemble, which may give a new complexion to the business. If this State should, in the intermediate time, make the ninth that shall have ratified the proposed government, it will, I flatter myself, have its due weight. To show that this event is now more to be expected than heretofore, I will give you a few particulars, which I have from good authority, and which you might not perhaps immediately obtain through any public channel of conveyance.*

---

nothing but that your character stands in the fairest possible light, and consequently cannot be actuated by any prejudice against your pretensions.

"I beg, Sir, that the candor and freedom which I have used on this occasion may not be misinterpreted to give you any unintended and unnecessary anxiety, or to induce you to believe, that I have taken in ill part the application, although I thought it to be altogether untimely and improper. On the contrary you may rely upon my protestation, that I am, in every personal consideration, with real esteem and friendship, &c." — *June 8th.*

* *From Mr. Jay's Letter.* — "It gives me pleasure to find, that the probability of Virginia's adopting the proposed constitution rather increases. Such an event would undoubtedly disarm the opposition. It appears by recent advices from Charleston, that we may count on South Carolina; and the New Hampshire delegates assure me, that their State will come into the measure. There is much reason to believe, that the majority of the convention of this State will be composed of antifederal characters; but it is doubtful whether the leaders will be able to govern the party. Many in the opposition are friends to Union, and mean well, but

On the day appointed for the meeting of the convention, a large proportion of the members assembled, and unanimously placed Mr. Pendleton in the chair. Having on that and the subsequent day chosen the rest of their officers, and fixed upon the mode of conducting the business, it was moved by some one of those opposed to the constitution to debate the whole by paragraphs, without taking any question until the investigation should be completed. This was as unexpected as acceptable to the federalists, and their ready acquiescence seems to have somewhat startled the opposite party, for fear they had committed themselves.

Mr. Nicholas opened the business by very ably advocating the system of representation. Mr. Henry in answer went more vaguely into the discussion of the constitution, intimating that the federal convention had exceeded their powers, and that we had been and might be happy under the old confederation, with a few alterations. This called up Governor Randolph, who is reported to have spoken with great pathos in reply, and who declared, that, since so many of the States had adopted the proposed constitution, he considered the sense of America to be already taken, and that he should give his vote in favor of it without insisting previously upon amendments. Mr. Mason rose

---

their principal leaders are very far from being solicitous about the fate of the Union. They wish and mean, if possible, to reject the constitution, with as little debate and as much speed as may be. It is not, however, certain, that the greater part of their party will be equally decided, or rather equally desperate. An idea has taken air, that the southern part of the State will at all events adhere to the Union, and, if necessary to that end, seek a separation from the northern. This idea has influence on the fears of the party. I cannot find, that they have as yet so looked forward to contingent events, or even to those the most probable, as to have united in, or formed, any system adapted to them." —*New York, May 29th.*

in opposition, and Mr. Madison reserved himself to obviate the objections of Mr. Henry and Colonel Mason the next day. Thus the matter rested when the last accounts came away.

Upon the whole, the following inferences seem to have been drawn; that Mr. Randolph's declaration will have considerable effect with those, who had hitherto been wavering; that Mr. Henry and Colonel Mason took different and awkward ground, and by no means equalled the public expectation in their speeches; that the former has probably receded somewhat from his violent measures to coalesce with the latter; and that the leaders of the opposition appear rather chagrined, and hardly to be decided as to their mode of opposition.

The sanguine friends of the constitution counted upon a majority of twenty at their first meeting, which number they imagine will be greatly increased; while those equally strong in their wishes, but more temperate in their habits of thinking, speak less confidently of the greatness of the majority, and express apprehensions of the arts, that may yet be practised to excite alarms with the members from the western district (Kentucky). All, however, agree, that the beginning has been auspicious as could possibly have been expected. A few days will now ascertain us of the result. With sentiments of the highest esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO WILLIAM SMITH, AND OTHERS, OF BALTIMORE.

Mount Vernon, 8 June, 1788.

GENTLEMEN,

Captain Barney has just arrived here in the miniature ship called *The Federalist*, and has done me the honor to offer that beautiful curiosity as a present to me on your part. I pray you, Gentlemen, to accept the warmest expressions of my sensibility for this *specimen of American ingenuity*, in which the exactitude of the proportions, the neatness of the workmanship, and the elegance of the decorations, which make your present fit to be preserved in a cabinet of curiosities, at the same time that they exhibit the skill and taste of the artists, demonstrate that Americans are not inferior to any people whatever in the use of mechanical instruments, and the art of ship-building.

The unanimity of the agricultural State of Maryland in general, as well as of the commercial town of Baltimore in particular, expressed in their recent decision on the subject of a general government, will not, I persuade myself, be without its due efficacy on the minds of their neighbours, who, in many instances, are intimately connected, not only by the nature of their produce, but by the ties of blood and the habits of life. Under these circumstances, I cannot entertain an idea, that the voice of the convention of this State, which is now in session, will be dissonant from that of her nearly allied sister, who is only separated by the Potomac.

You will permit me, Gentlemen, to indulge my feelings in reiterating the heart-felt wish, that the happiness of this country may equal the desires of its sincerest friends, and that the patriotic town, of which you are inhabitants, and in the prosperity of which I

have always found myself strongly interested, may not only continue to increase in the same wonderful manner it has formerly done, but that its trade, manufactures, and other resources of wealth, may be placed permanently in a more flourishing situation than they have hitherto been in. I am, with respect, &c.*

TO HENRY KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 17 June, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I received your letter of the 25th of May, just when I was on the eve of a departure for Fredericksburg to pay a visit to my mother, from whence I returned only last evening. The information of the accession of South Carolina to the new government since your letter, gives us a new subject of mutual felicitations.

* The citizens of Baltimore had recently celebrated the adoption of the constitution in Maryland by various demonstrations of joy. There was a procession, in which the mechanical trades and liberal professions made a brilliant display under their appropriate banners. Commodore Barney performed a conspicuous part on this occasion. "He had a small boat, fifteen feet in length, completely rigged and perfectly equipped *as a ship*, which was called *The Federalist;* which, being mounted on four wheels and drawn by the same number of horses, took its place in the procession. He commanded the ship, and was honored with a crew of captains, who, at his word and the boatswain's pipe, went through all the various manœuvres of making and taking in sail, to the great delight of the crowded windows, doors, and balconies, by which they passed. The ship was immediately followed by all the captains, mates, and seamen at that time in the port of Baltimore. It was paraded through all the principal streets of Fell's Point and other portions of the city, and finally *anchored* on the beautiful and lofty bank of the Basin, which from that occurrence received, and has ever since borne, the name of *Federal Hill.*" After the pageant was over, it was resolved to present the ship to General Washington in the name of the merchants and ship-masters of Baltimore. It was launched, and navigated by Commodore Barney down the Chesapeake Bay to the mouth of the Potomac, and thence up the river to Mount Vernon. — *Life of Joshua Barney*, p. 157.

It was to be hoped that this auspicious event would have considerable influence upon the proceedings of the convention of Virginia, but I do not find it to have been the case. Affairs in the convention, for some time past, have not worn so good an aspect as we could have wished; and, indeed, the acceptance of the constitution has become more doubtful than it was thought to be at their first meeting.

The purport of the intelligence I received from my private letters by the last night's mail is, that every species of address and artifice has been put in practice by the antifederalists to create jealousies and excite alarms. Much appears to depend upon the final part which the Kentucky members will take; into whose minds apprehensions of unreal dangers, respecting the navigation of the Mississippi, and their organization into a separate State, have been industriously infused. Each side seems to think at present, that it has a small majority. However it shall turn, it will be very inconsiderable. Though, for my own part, I cannot but imagine, if any decision is had, it will be in favor of the adoption. My apprehension rather is, that a strenuous and successful effort may be made for an adjournment, under an idea of opening a correspondence with those, who are opposed to the constitution in other States. Colonel Oswald has been at Richmond, it is said, with letters from the antifederalists in New York and Pennsylvania to their coadjutors in this State.

The resolution, which came from the antifederalists, much to the astonishment of the other party, that no question should be taken until the whole plan should have been discussed paragraph by paragraph, and the remarkable tardiness in their proceedings (for the convention has been able as yet only to get through the

second or third section), are thought by some to have been designed to protract the business until the time when the Assembly is to convene, that is the 23d instant, in order to have a more colorable pretext for an adjournment. But, notwithstanding the resolution, there has been much desultory debating, and the opposers of the constitution are reported to have gone generally into the merits of the question. I know not how the matter may be, but a few days will determine.*

* Mr. Bushrod Washington, who was a member of the Virginia convention, wrote to his uncle the following account of the early proceedings of that body.

"The convention has hitherto made a very slow progress towards finishing the business before them, and leads me to apprehend, that we shall be detained here much longer than I at first expected. We have determined to go through the constitution clause by clause, before any question shall be put. This regulation, if attended to, would expedite the business, by confining us to the particular parts objected to. But the debates have hitherto been general and desultory, although we have proceeded no farther than the third section of the first clause. The defects of the old confederation, and the necessity of framing an entirely new one, seem to have claimed the principal share of our attention.

"Mr. Henry on Thursday called upon the friends to the proposed plan to point out the objections to the present federal constitution. This challenge, which was given with an appearance of great confidence, drew from the governor yesterday a very able and elegant harangue for two hours and a half; for I suppose you have been informed of Mr. Randolph's determination to vote for the proposed government without previous amendments. He pointed out those defects, and painted in a masterly and affecting manner the necessity of a more solid union of the States. Mr. Henry's confidence in the power and greatness of Virginia, which he said she might rest upon though dismembered from her sister States, was very well exposed by the above speaker. Mr. Madison followed, and with such force of reasoning, and a display of such irresistible truths, that opposition seemed to have quitted the field. However, I am not so sanguine as to trust appearances, or even to flatter myself that he made many converts. A few I have been confidently informed he did influence, who were decidedly in the opposition. Mr. Nicholas concluded the day with a very powerful speech, inferior to none that had been made before as to close and connected argument. Were I to attempt to predict the fate of the constitution, it must be founded on conjecture." —*Richmond, June 6th.*

I am sorry to find, not only from your intimations, but also from many of the returns in the late papers, that there should be so great a majority against the constitution in the convention of New York; and yet I can hardly conceive, from motives of policy and prudence, that they will reject it absolutely, if either this State or New Hampshire should make the ninth in adopting it; as that measure, which gives efficacy to the system, must place any State that shall actually have refused its assent to the new Union in a very awkward and disagreeable predicament.

By a letter I have just received from a young gentleman who lives with me, but who is now at home in New Hampshire, I am advised that there is every prospect that the constitution will be adopted in that State almost immediately upon the meeting of the convention. I cannot but hope, then, that the States, which may be disposed to make a secession, will think often and seriously on the consequences.

I am, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 18 June, 1788.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

I cannot account for your not having received some of my letters before you wrote yours of the 18th of March, as I have been writing to you at short intervals constantly since last autumn. To demonstrate the satisfaction I enjoy on the receipt of your favors, I always answer them almost as soon as they arrive; although, on account of my retirement from the busy scenes of life, and the want of diversity in the tenor of our affairs, I can promise to give you little novelty

or entertainment in proportion to what I expect in return. Were you to acknowledge the receipt of my letters, and give the dates of them when you write to me, I should be able to ascertain which of them had reached you, and which had miscarried. I am left in doubt whether the Indian vocabularies have got to you or not.

There seems to be a great deal of bloody work cut out for this summer in the north of Europe. If war, want, and plague are to desolate those huge armies that are assembled, who, that has the feelings of a man, can refrain from shedding a tear over the miserable victims of regal ambition? It is really a strange thing, that there should not be room enough in the world for men to live without cutting one another's throats. As France, Spain, and England have scarcely recovered from the wounds of the late war, I would fain hope that they will hardly be dragged into this. However, if the war should be protracted, and not end in a campaign as you intimate it possibly may, there seems to be a probability of other powers being engaged on one side or the other. By the British papers, which are our principal source of intelligence, though not always to be relied on, as you know, it appears that the Spaniards are fitting out a considerable fleet, and that the English ministry have prohibited the subjects of their kingdom from furnishing transports for the Empress of Russia. France must be too intent on its own domestic affairs to wish to interfere, and we have not heard that the King of Prussia, since his exploits in Holland, has taken it into his head to meddle with other people's business. I cannot say that I am sorry to hear, that the Algerines and other piratical powers are about to assist the Porte, because I think Russia will not forget, and

that she will take some leisure moment just to keep her fleets in exercise for exterminating those nests of miscreants.

I like not much the situation of affairs in France. The bold demands of the parliaments, and the decisive tone of the King, show that but little more irritation would be necessary to blow up the spark of discontent into a flame, that might not easily be quenched. If I were to advise, I should say that great moderation should be used on both sides. Let it not, my dear Marquis, be considered as a derogation from the good opinion, that I entertain of your prudence, when I caution you, as an individual desirous of signalizing yourself in the cause of your country and freedom, against running into extremes and prejudicing your cause. The King, though, I think from every thing I have been able to learn, he is really a good-hearted though a warm-spirited man, if thwarted injudiciously in the execution of prerogatives that belonged to the crown, and in plans which he conceives calculated to promote the national good, may disclose qualities he has been little thought to possess. On the other hand, such a spirit seems to be awakened in the kingdom, as, if managed with extreme prudence, may produce a gradual and tacit revolution much in favor of the subjects, by abolishing *lettres de cachet*, and defining more accurately the powers of government. It is a wonder to me, that there should be found a single monarch, who does not realize that his own glory and felicity must depend on the prosperity and happiness of his people. How easy is it for a sovereign to do that, which shall not only immortalize his name, but attract the blessings of millions.

In a letter I wrote you a few days ago by Mr. Bar-

low, but which might not possibly have reached New York until after his departure, I mentioned the accession of Maryland to the proposed government, and gave you the state of politics to that period. Since which the convention of South Carolina has ratified the constitution by a great majority. That of this State has been sitting almost three weeks; and, so nicely does it appear to be balanced, that each side asserts it has a preponderancy of votes in its favor. It is probable, therefore, the majority will be small, let it fall on whichever part it may. I am inclined to believe it will be in favor of the adoption. The conventions of New York and New Hampshire both assemble this week. A large proportion of members, with the governor at their head, in the former, are said to be opposed to the government in contemplation. New Hampshire, it is thought, will adopt it without much hesitation or delay. It is a little strange, that the men of large property in the south should be more afraid that the constitution will produce an aristocracy or a monarchy, than the genuine democratical people of the east. Such are our actual prospects. The accession of one State more will complete the number, which, by the constitutional provision, will be sufficient in the first instance to carry the government into effect.

And then, I expect, that many blessings will be attributed to our new government, which are now taking their rise from that industry and frugality, into the practice of which the people have been forced from necessity. I really believe, that there never was so much labor and economy to be found before in the country as at the present moment. If they persist in the habits they are acquiring, the good effects will soon be distinguishable. When the people shall find

themselves secure under an energetic government, when foreign nations shall be disposed to give us equal advantages in commerce from dread of retaliation, when the burdens of war shall be in a manner done away by the sale of western lands, when the seeds of happiness which are sown here shall begin to expand themselves, and when every one, under his own vine and fig-tree, shall begin to taste the fruits of freedom, then all these blessings (for all these blessings will come) will be referred to the fostering influence of the new government. Whereas many causes will have conspired to produce them. You see I am not less enthusiastic than I ever have been, if a belief that peculiar scenes of felicity are reserved for this country is to be denominated enthusiasm. Indeed, I do not believe, that Providence has done so much for nothing. It has always been my creed, that we should not be left as a monument to prove, "that mankind, under the most favorable circumstances for civil liberty and happiness, are unequal to the task of governing themselves, and therefore made for a master."

We have had a backward spring and summer, with more rainy and cloudy weather than almost ever has been known; still the appearance of crops in some parts of the country is favorable, as we may generally expect will be the case, from the difference of soil and variety of climate in so extensive a region; insomuch that I hope, some day or other, we shall become a storehouse and granary for the world. In addition to our former channels of trade, salted provisions, butter, and cheese are exported with profit from the eastern States to the East Indies. In consequence of a contract, large quantities of flour are lately sent from Baltimore for supplying the garrison of Gibraltar. I am, &c.

TO RICHARD HENDERSON.*

Mount Vernon, 19 June, 1788.

SIR,

Your favor of the 5th instant was lodged at my house while I was absent on a visit to my mother. I am now taking the earliest opportunity of noticing its contents, and those of its enclosure. Willing as I am to give satisfaction, so far as I am able, to every reasonable inquiry, (and this is certainly not only so, but may be highly important and interesting,) I must however rather deal in general than particular observations; as I think you will be able, from the *length* of your residence in the country, and the extensiveness of your acquaintance with its affairs, to make the necessary applications, and add the proper details. Nor would I choose that my interference in the business should be transmitted, lest, in a malicious world, it might be represented that I was officiously using the arts of seduction to depopulate other countries for the sake of peopling our own.

In the first place it is a point conceded, that America, under an efficient government, will be the most favorable country of any in the world for persons of industry and frugality possessed of a moderate capital. It is also believed, that it will not be less advantageous to the happiness of the lowest class of people, on account of the equal distribution of property, the great plenty of unoccupied lands, and the facility of procuring the means of subsistence. The scheme of purchasing a good tract of freehold estate, and bringing out a number of able-bodied men, indented for a certain time, appears to be indisputably a rational one.

* A gentleman, who had forwarded certain queries to General Washington, which had been sent to him from Scotland by persons proposing to emigrate to America.

All the interior arrangements of transferring the property and commencing the establishment, you are as well acquainted with as I can possibly be. It might be considered as a point of more difficulty to decide upon the place, which should be most proper for a settlement. Although I believe that emigrants from other countries to this, who shall be well-disposed, and conduct themselves properly, would be treated with equal friendship and kindness in all parts of it; yet, in the old settled States, land is so much occupied, and the value so much enhanced by the contiguous cultivation, that the price would, in general, be an objection. The land in the western country, or that on the Ohio, like all others, has its advantages and disadvantages. The neighbourhood of the savages, and the difficulty of transportation, are the great objections. The danger of the first will soon cease by the strong establishments now taking place; the inconveniences of the second will be, in a great degree, remedied by opening the internal navigation. No colony in America was ever settled under such favorable auspices, as that which has just commenced at the Muskingum. Information, property, and strength, will be its characteristics. I know many of the settlers personally, and there never were men better calculated to promote the welfare of such a community.

If I was a young man, just preparing to begin the world, or if advanced in life, and had a family to make a provision for, I know of no country where I should rather fix my habitation than in some part of that region, for which the writer of the queries seems to have a predilection. He might be informed that his namesake and distant relation, General St. Clair, is not only in high repute, but that he is governor of all the territory westward of the Ohio, and that there is a gentleman

(Mr. Joel Barlow) gone from New York by the last French packet, who will be in London in the course of this year, and who is authorized to dispose of a very large body of land in that country. The author of the queries may then be referred to the "*Information for those who would wish to remove to America*," by the great philosopher Dr. Franklin, and published in Europe in the year 1784. Short as it is, it contains almost every thing, that needs to be known on the subject of migration to this country. You may find that excellent little treatise in "*Carey's American Museum*," for September, 1787. It is worthy of being republished in Scotland, and every other part of Europe.

As to the European publications respecting the United States, they are commonly very defective. The Abbé Raynal is quite erroneous. Guthrie, though somewhat better informed, is not absolutely correct. There is now an *American Geography* preparing for the press by a Mr. Morse of New Haven in Connecticut, which, from the pains the author has taken in travelling through the States, and acquiring information from the principal characters in each, will probably be much more exact and useful. Of books at present existing, Mr. Jefferson's "*Notes on Virginia*" will give the best idea of this part of the continent to a foreigner; and the "*American Farmer's Letters*," written by Mr. Crèvecœur (commonly called Mr. St. John), the French consul in New York, who actually resided twenty years as a farmer in that State, will afford a great deal of profitable and amusing information, respecting the private life of the Americans, as well as the progress of agriculture, manufactures, and arts, in their country. Perhaps the picture he gives, though founded in fact, is in some instances embellished with rather too flattering circumstances. I am, &c.

TO EDWARD PEMBERTON, IN ENGLAND.

Mount Vernon, 20 June, 1788.

SIR,

I have just received the letter and piece of poetry, which you did me the favor to address to me on the 21st of March last, and take an early opportunity of acknowledging the receipt of them, and of expressing my sense of the sentiments you are pleased to entertain for me. It cannot fail of being agreeable to me, that my conduct, through the difficult scenes in which I have been called to act, should be approved where my person is unknown.

Not arrogating to myself any particular skill in deciding critically on the merits of poetical compositions, you will excuse me for being silent on a subject in which I pretend not to judge, and for adverting rather to the friendly wishes you make for myself and country, than to the style and numbers in which they are communicated. You may be assured, Sir, that the good opinion of honest men, friends to freedom and well-wishers to mankind, wherever they may be born or happen to reside, is the only kind of reputation a wise man would ever desire.

Although your observations on ancient colonization, and the recent contest between Great Britain and America, seem to be well-founded, yet in our actual situation it only remains to profit by a liberal commercial intercourse. In the mean time your disinterested friendship for this country will probably be gratified, on the adoption of measures now in contemplation, in finding, that it will arrive at a degree of respectability and happiness, to which it has hitherto been a stranger. I am, with all due regard, &c.

TO JOHN LATHROP.

Mount Vernon, 22 June, 1788.

REVEREND AND RESPECTED SIR,

Your very acceptable favor of the 16th of May, covering a recent publication of the proceedings of the Humane Society,* has, within a few days past, been put into my hands. I observe, with singular satisfaction, the cases in which your benevolent institution has been instrumental in recalling some of our fellow creatures, as it were, from beyond the gates of eternity, and has given occasion for the hearts of parents and friends to leap for joy. The provision made for the preservation of shipwrecked mariners is also highly estimable in the view of every philanthropic mind, and greatly consolatory to that suffering part of the community. These things will draw upon you the blessings of those, who were nigh to perish. These works of charity and good will towards men reflect, in my estimation, great lustre upon the authors, and presage an era of still farther improvements. How pitiful, in the eye of reason and religion, is that false ambition, which desolates the world with fire and sword for the purposes of conquest and fame, when compared to the milder virtues of making our neighbours and our fellow men as happy as their frail conditions and perishable natures will permit them to be!

I am happy to find, that the proposed general government meets with your approbation, as indeed it does with that of the most disinterested and discerning men. The convention of this State is now in session, and I cannot but hope, from all the accounts I receive, that the constitution will be adopted by it; though not

* Massachusetts Humane Society.

without considerable opposition. I trust, however, that the commendable example exhibited by the minority in your State will not be without its salutary influence in this. In truth, it appears to me, that, should the proposed government be generally and harmoniously adopted, it will be a new phenomenon in the political and moral world, and an astonishing victory gained by enlightened reason over brutal force. I have the honor to be, with very great consideration, &c.

TO CHARLES COTESWORTH PINCKNEY.

Mount Vernon, 28 June, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I had the pleasure to receive, a day or two ago, your obliging letter of the 24th of last month, in which you advise me of the ratification of the federal constitution by South Carolina. By a more rapid water conveyance, that good news had some few days before arrived at Baltimore, so as to have been very opportunely communicated to the convention of this State in session at Richmond. It is with great satisfaction I have it now in my power to inform you, that, on the 25th instant, the delegates of Virginia adopted the constitution *in toto*, by a division of eighty-nine in favor of it, to seventy-nine against it; and that, notwithstanding the majority is so small, yet, in consequence of some conciliatory conduct and recommendatory amendments, a happy acquiescence, it is said, is likely to terminate the business here in as favorable a manner as could possibly have been expected.

No sooner had the citizens of Alexandria, who are federal to a man, received the intelligence by the mail last night, than they determined to devote this day to

festivity. But their exhilaration was greatly increased, and a much keener zest given to their enjoyment, by the arrival of an express, two hours before day, with the news, that the convention of New Hampshire had, on the 21st instant, acceded to the new confederacy by a majority of eleven voices, that is to say, fifty-seven to forty-six.

Thus the citizens of Alexandria, when convened, constituted the first public company in America, which had the pleasure of pouring a libation to the prosperity of the ten States, that had actually adopted the general government. The day itself is memorable for more reasons than one. It was recollected, that this day is the anniversary of the battles of Sullivan's Island and Monmouth. I have just returned from assisting at the entertainment, and mention these details, unimportant as they are in themselves, the rather because I think we may rationally indulge the pleasing hope, that the Union will now be established upon a durable basis, and that Providence seems still disposed to favor the members of it with unequalled opportunities for political happiness.

From the local situation, as well as the other circumstances of North Carolina, I should be truly astonished if that State should withdraw itself from the Union. On the contrary, I flatter myself with a confident expectation, that more salutary counsels will certainly prevail. At present there is more doubt how the question will be immediately disposed of in New York; for it seems to be understood, that there is a majority in the convention opposed to the adoption of the new federal system. Yet it is hardly to be supposed, or rather in my judgment it is irrational to suppose, that they will reject a government, which, from an unorganized embryo ready to be stifled with a breath, has now

in the maturity of its birth assumed a confirmed bodily existence. Or, to drop the metaphor, the point in debate has at least shifted its ground from policy to expediency. The decision of ten States cannot be without its operation. Perhaps the wisest way in this crisis will be not to attempt to accept or reject, but to adjourn until the people in some parts of the State can consider the magnitude of the question, and the consequences involved in it, more coolly and deliberately. After New York shall have acted, then only one little State will remain. Suffice it to say, it is universally believed, that the scales are ready to drop from the eyes, and the infatuation to be removed from the heart, of Rhode Island.

Mrs. Washington and all with us desire their best compliments may be presented to Mrs. Pinckney and yourself. Wishing that mine may also be made acceptable to you both, I am, &c.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 29 June, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I beg you will accept my thanks for the communications in your letter of the 3d instant, and my congratulations on the increasing good dispositions of the citizens of your State, of which the late elections are strongly indicative. No one can rejoice more than I do at every step the people of this great country take to preserve the Union, to establish good order and government, and to render the nation happy at home and respectable abroad. No country upon earth ever had it more in its power to attain these blessings than United America. Wondrously strange, then, and much to be regretted indeed would it be, were we to neglect the

means, and to depart from the road, which Providence has pointed out to us so plainly. I cannot believe it will ever come to pass. The great Governor of the universe has led us too long and too far on the road to happiness and glory, to forsake us in the midst of it. By folly and improper conduct, proceeding from a variety of causes, we may now and then get bewildered; but I hope and trust, that there is good sense and virtue enough left to recover the right path before we shall be entirely lost.

You will, before this letter can reach you, have heard of the ratification of the new government by this State. Our accounts from Richmond are, that the debates, through all the different stages of the business, though animated, have been conducted with great dignity and temper; that the final decision exhibited a solemn scene; and that there is every reason to expect a perfect acquiescence therein by the minority. Mr. Henry, the great leader of it, has signified, that, though he can never be reconciled to the constitution in its present form, and shall give it every constitutional opposition in his power, yet he will submit to it peaceably, as he thinks every good citizen ought to do when it is in exercise, and that he will, both by precept and example, inculcate this doctrine on all around him.

There is little doubt now entertained here of the ratification of the proposed constitution by North Carolina; and, however great the opposition to it may be in New York, the leaders will, I should conceive, consider well the consequences before they reject it. With respect to Rhode Island, the power that governs there has so far baffled all calculation on this question, that no man would choose to hazard an opinion, lest he might be suspected of participating in its phrensy. You have every good wish of this family, and the sincere regard of your affectionate, &c.

TO JOHN JAY.

Mount Vernon, 18 July, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

A few days ago I had the pleasure to receive your letter from Poughkeepsie; since which I have not obtained any authentic advices of the proceedings of your convention. The clue you gave me for penetrating into the principles and wishes of the four classes of men among you, who are opposed to the constitution, has opened a large field for reflection and conjecture. The accession of ten States must operate forcibly with all the opposition, except the class which is comprehended in your last description.* Before this time you will probably have come to some decision. While we are waiting the result with the greatest anxiety, our printers are not so fortunate as to obtain any papers from the eastward. Mine, which have generally been more regular, have however been frequently interrupted for some time past.

It is extremely to be lamented, that a new arrangement in the post-office, unfavorable to the circulation of intelligence, should have taken place at the instant when the momentous question of a general government was to come before the people. I have seen no good apology, not even in Mr. Hazard's publication, for deviating from the old custom of permitting printers to

* *From Mr. Jay's Letter.* — "The leaders in opposition seem to have more extensive views than their adherents, and, until the latter perceive that circumstance, they will probably continue combined. The greater number are, I believe, averse to a vote of rejection. Some would be content with recommendatory amendments; others wish for explanatory ones to settle constructions, which they think doubtful; others would not be satisfied with less than absolute and previous amendments; and I am mistaken if there be not a few, who prefer a separation from the Union to any national government whatever."

exchange their papers by the mail. That practice was a great public convenience and gratification. If the privilege was not from convention an original right, it had from prescription strong pretensions for continuance, especially at so interesting a period. The interruption in that mode of conveyance has not only given great concern to the friends of the constitution, who wished the public to be possessed of every thing, that might be printed on both sides of the question, but it has afforded its enemies very plausible pretexts for dealing out their scandals, and exciting jealousies by inducing a belief, that the suppression of intelligence, at that critical juncture, was a wicked trick of policy, contrived by an aristocratic junto. Now, if the postmaster-general, with whose character I am unacquainted, and therefore would not be understood to form an unfavorable opinion of his motives, has any candid advisers, who conceive that he merits the public employment, they ought to counsel him to wipe away the aspersion he has incautiously brought upon a good cause. If he is unworthy of the office he holds, it would be well that the ground of a complaint, apparently so general, should be inquired into, and, if well-founded, redressed through the medium of a better appointment.

It is a matter in my judgment of primary importance, that the public mind should be relieved from inquietude on this subject. I know it is said, that the irregularity or defect has happened accidentally, in consequence of the contract for transporting the mail on horseback, instead of having it carried in the *stages*; but I must confess I could never account, upon any satisfactory principles, for the inveterate enmity with which the postmaster-general is asserted to be actuated against that valuable institution. It has often been understood by wise politicians and enlightened patriots, that giving

a facility to the means of travelling for strangers, and of intercourse for citizens, was an object of legislative concern, and a circumstance highly beneficial to any country. In England, I am told, they consider the mail-coaches as a great modern improvement in their post-office regulations. I trust we are not too old, or too proud, to profit by the experience of others. In this article the materials are amply within our reach. I am taught to imagine, that the horses, the vehicles, and the accommodations in America, with very little encouragement, might in a short period become as good as the same articles are to be found in any country of Europe. And at the same time I am sorry to learn, that the line of stages is at present interrupted in some parts of New England, and totally discontinued at the southward.

I mention these suggestions only as my particular thoughts on an establishment, which I had conceived to be of great importance. Your proximity to the person in question, and connexion with the characters in power, will enable you to decide better than I can on the validity of the allegations, and in that case to weigh the expediency of dropping such hints as may serve to give satisfaction to the public. With sentiments of the highest consideration and regard, I am, &c.

TO JOHN LANGDON, GOVERNOR OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.

Mount Vernon, 20 July, 1788

DEAR SIR,

I had the satisfaction to receive regularly your favor of the 21st ultimo, announcing the adoption of the federal government by the convention of New Hampshire. You will already have been informed, through the or-

dinary channels of communication, that the same event took effect in this State a few days afterward. And I am happy to say, that so far as I have been able to learn, a spirit of harmony and acquiescence obtained among the large and respectable minority, in as great a degree as could possibly have been expected.

If we may calculate upon rectitude in the views, and prudence in the conduct, of the leading characters throughout the States, accompanied by industry and honesty in the mass of the people, we may assuredly anticipate a new era; and perhaps we shall not deceive ourselves by expecting a more happy one, than has before appeared on this checkered scene of existence. But we ought not to be too sanguine, or to expect that we shall be entirely exempted from the ills, which fall to the lot of humanity. With congratulations to your Excellency on your elevation to the chief magistracy of your State, and with sentiments of consideration and respect, I remain, &c.

TO JONATHAN TRUMBULL.

Mount Vernon, 20 July, 1788.

MY DEAR TRUMBULL,

I have received your favor of the 20th of June, and thank you heartily for the confidential information contained in it. The character given of a certain great personage, who is remarkable for neither forgetting nor forgiving, I believe to be just. What will be the effect of the addition of such an extraordinary weight of power and influence as the new arrangement of the East India affairs gives to one branch of the British government, cannot be certainly foretold; but one thing is certain, that is to say, it will always be wise for America to be

prepared for events. Nor can I refrain from indulging the expectation, that the time is not very distant, when it will be more in the power of the United States, than it has hitherto been, to be forearmed, as well as forewarned, against the evil contingencies of European politics.

You will have perceived from the public papers, that I was not erroneous in my calculation, that the constitution would be accepted by the convention of this State. The majority, it is true, was small, and the minority respectable in many points of view. But the great part of the minority here, as in most other States, have conducted themselves with great prudence and political moderation; insomuch that we may anticipate a pretty general and harmonious acquiescence. We shall impatiently wait the result from New York and North Carolina. The other State, which has not yet acted, is nearly out of the question.

I am happy to hear from General Lincoln and others, that affairs are taking a good turn in Massachusetts; but the triumph of salutary and liberal measures, over those of an opposite tendency, seems to be as complete in Connecticut as in any other State, and affords a particular subject of congratulation. Your friend Colonel Humphreys informs me, from the wonderful revolution of sentiment in favor of federal measures, and the marvellous change for the better in the elections of your State, that he shall begin to suspect that miracles have not ceased. Indeed, for myself, since so much liberality has been displayed in the construction and adoption of the proposed general government, I am almost disposed to be of the same opinion. Or at least we may, with a kind of pious and grateful exultation, trace the finger of Providence through those dark and mysterious events, which first induced the States

to appoint a general convention, and then led them one after another, by such steps as were best calculated to effect the object, into an adoption of the system recommended by that general convention; thereby in all human probability laying a lasting foundation for tranquillity and happiness, when we had but too much reason to fear, that confusion and misery were coming rapidly upon us. That the same good Providence may still continue to protect us, and prevent us from dashing the cup of national felicity just as it has been lifted to our lips, is the earnest prayer of, my dear Sir, your faithful friend, &c.

TO SIR EDWARD NEWENHAM.

Mount Vernon, 20 July, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I beg you will be persuaded, that it always gives me singular pleasure to hear from you, and that your obliging letters of the 22d and 25th of March afforded me particular satisfaction. I am also to thank you for the Irish parliamentary papers, which have come safely to hand. The edition of *Cook's Voyage*, which you mention having forwarded by a former occasion, has not been so successful in its voyage to me, any more than the new books, which, in a letter of the 13th of November, 1786, you say had been sent to me by the Mary, Captain Matthews, or I should not have neglected the acknowledgment.

I am heartily glad to find, that the prosperity of Ireland is on the increase. It was afflicting to the philanthropic mind to consider the mass of people, inhabiting a country naturally fertile in productions, and full of resources, sunk to an abject degree of

penury and depression. Such has been the picture we have received of the peasantry. Nor do their calamities seem to be entirely removed yet, as we may gather from the spirited speech of Mr. Grattan on the commutation of tithes. But I hope, ere long, matters will go right there, and in the rest of the world; for, instead of the discouraging idea, that every thing is growing worse, I would fain cheer myself with a hope, that every thing is beginning to mend. As you observe, if Ireland were five hundred miles farther distant from Britain, the case with respect to the former would be speedily and materially changed for the better.

But what shall we say of wars, and the appearances of wars, in the rest of the world? Mankind are not yet ripe for the millennial state. The affairs of some of the greatest potentates appear to be very much embroiled in the north of Europe. One would suppose, if discipline and arrangement are to be calculated upon in preference to ignorance and brutal force, that the Porte must recede before the two imperial powers. But in the game of war there are so many contingencies, which often prevent the most probable events from taking place, and in the present instance there are so many causes, which may kindle the hostile conflagration into a general flame, that we should not be over hasty and sanguine in drawing our conclusions. I hope the United States of America will be able to keep disengaged from the labyrinth of European politics and wars; and that before long they will, by the adoption of a good national government, have become respectable in the eyes of the world, so that none of the maritime powers, especially none of those who hold possessions in the new world, or the West Indies, shall presume to treat them with insult or contempt. It should be the policy of United America to administer

to their wants without being engaged in their quarrels. And it is not in the ability of the proudest and most polite people on earth to prevent us from becoming a great, a respectable, and a commercial nation, if we shall continue united and faithful to ourselves.

Your solicitude, that an efficient and good government may be established in this country, in order that it may enjoy felicity at home and respectability abroad, serves only to confirm me in the opinion I have always entertained of your disinterested and ardent friendship for this land of freedom. It is true, that, for want of a proper confederation, we have not yet been in a situation fully to enjoy those blessings, which God and nature seem to have intended for us. But I begin to look forward with a kind of political faith to scenes of national happiness, which have not heretofore been offered for the fruition of the most favored nations. The natural, political, and moral circumstances of our nascent empire justify the anticipation. We have an almost unbounded territory, whose natural advantages for agriculture and commerce equal those of any on the globe. In a civil point of view we have the unequalled privilege of choosing our own political institutions, and of improving upon the experience of mankind in the formation of a confederated government, where due energy will not be incompatible with the unalienable rights of freemen; and the information and morals of our citizens appear to be peculiarly favorable for the introduction of such a plan of government as I have just now described.

Although there were some few things in the constitution recommended by the federal convention to the determination of the people, which did not fully accord with my wishes, yet, having taken every circumstance seriously into consideration, I was con-

vinced it approached nearer to perfection than any government hitherto instituted among men. I was also convinced, that nothing but a genuine spirit of amity and accommodation could have induced the members to make those mutual concessions, and to sacrifice at the shrine of enlightened liberty those local prejudices, which seemed to oppose an insurmountable barrier to prevent them from harmonizing in any system whatsoever.

But so it has happened by the good pleasure of Providence, and the same happy disposition has been diffused and fostered among the people at large. You will permit me to say, that a greater drama is now acting on this theatre, than has heretofore been brought on the American stage, or any other in the world. We exhibit at present the novel and astonishing spectacle of a whole people deliberating calmly on what form of government will be most conducive to their happiness; and deciding with an unexpected degree of unanimity in favor of a system, which they conceive calculated to answer the purpose. It is only necessary to add for your satisfaction, that, as all the States which have yet acted, and which are ten in number, have adopted the proposed constitution; and as the concurrence of nine States was sufficient to carry it into effect in the first instance, it is expected the government will be in complete organization and execution before the commencement of the ensuing year.

I failed not, on the receipt of your letter, to make the best arrangements in my power for obtaining the opossums and birds you mentioned; but I shall not be able to succeed in time for this conveyance. Having heard of a male and female opossum with several young ones at the house of one of my friends in Ma-

ryland, I sent for them; but unfortunately they were all dead. I may probably be more successful in the autumn. I please myself with the hope, that the impediments, which have prevented your visiting America, will soon be removed, and that we shall have the satisfaction of manifesting to you personally our veneration for the patriots of other countries.

I have the honor to be, &c.

TO NOAH WEBSTER.

Mount Vernon, 31 July, 1788.

SIR,

I duly received your letter of the 14th of July, and can only answer you briefly, and generally from memory. A combined operation of the land and naval forces of France and America, for the year 1781, was preconcerted the year before. The point of attack was not absolutely agreed upon, because it would be easy for the Count de Grasse in good time before his departure from the West Indies to give notice by express at what place he could most conveniently first touch to receive advices, because it could not be foreknown where the enemy would be most susceptible of impression, and because we, having the command of the water, with sufficient means of conveyance, could transport ourselves to any spot with the greatest celerity. It was determined by me, nearly twelve months beforehand, at all hazards to give out and cause it to be believed by the highest military as well as civil officers, that New York was the destined place of attack, for the important purpose of inducing the middle and eastern States to make greater exertions in furnishing specific supplies than they oth-

erwise would have done, as well as for the interesting purpose of rendering the enemy less prepared elsewhere.

By these means, and these alone, artillery, boats, stores, and provisions were in seasonable preparation to move with the utmost rapidity to any part of the continent; for the difficulty consisted more in providing, than knowing how to apply, the military apparatus. Before the arrival of the Count de Grasse, it was the fixed determination to strike the enemy in the most vulnerable quarter so as to ensure success with moral certainty, as our affairs were then in the most ruinous train imaginable. New York was thought to be beyond our effort, and consequently the only hesitation that remained was between an attack upon the British army in Virginia and that in Charleston. And, finally, by the intervention of several communications, and some incidents which cannot be detailed in a letter, and which were altogether unknown to the late quartermaster-general of the army, who was informed of nothing but what related to the immediate duties of his own department, the hostile post in Virginia, from being a provisional and strongly expected, became the definitive and certain object of the campaign. I only add, that it never was in contemplation to attack New York, unless the garrison should first have been so far disgarnished to carry on the southern operations, as to render our success in the siege of that place as infallible as any future military event can ever be made. For, I repeat it, and dwell upon it again and again, some splendid advantage (whether upon a larger or smaller scale was almost immaterial) was so essentially necessary to revive the expiring hopes and languid exertions of the country, at the crisis in question, that I never would have consented

to embark in any enterprise, wherein, from the most rational plan and accurate calculations, the favorable issue should not have appeared as clear to my view as a ray of light. The failure of an attempt against the posts of the enemy could, in no other possible situation during the war, have been so fatal to our cause.

That much trouble was taken and finesse used to misguide and bewilder Sir Henry Clinton in regard to the real object, by fictitious communications as well as by making a deceptive provision of ovens, forage, and boats in his neighbourhood, is certain. Nor were less pains taken to deceive our own army; for I had always conceived, when the imposition did not completely take place at home, it could never sufficiently succeed abroad.

Your desire of obtaining truth is very laudable. I wish I had more leisure to gratify it, as I am equally solicitous, that the undisguised verity should be known. Many circumstances will unavoidably be misconceived and misrepresented. Notwithstanding most of the papers, which may properly be deemed official, are preserved, yet the knowledge of innumerable things of a more delicate and secret nature is confined to the perishable remembrance of some few of the present generation. I am, with sentiments of esteem and regard, Sir, &c.

TO JAMES M'HENRY.

Mount Vernon, 31 July, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

In reply to your recent favor, which has been duly received, I can only observe, that, as I never go from

home except when I am obliged by necessary avocations, and as I meddle as little as possible with politics, that my interference may not give occasion for impertinent imputations, so I am less likely than almost any person to have been informed of the circumstance to which you allude.* That some of the leading characters among the opponents of the proposed government have not laid aside their ideas of obtaining great and essential changes, through a constitutional opposition, as they term it, may be collected from their public speeches. That others will use more secret and perhaps insidious means to prevent its organization, may be presumed from their previous conduct on the subject. In addition to this probability, the casual information received from visitants at my house would lead me to expect, that a considerable effort will be made to procure the election of anti-federalists to the first Congress, in order to bring the subject immediately before the State legislatures, to open an extensive correspondence between the minorities for obtaining alterations, and in short to undo all that has been done.

It is reported, that a respectable neighbour of mine has said the constitution cannot be carried into execution without great amendments. But I will freely do the opposition with us the justice to declare, that I have heard of no cabals or canvassings respecting the elections. It is said to be otherwise on your side of the river. By letters from the eastern States I am induced to believe the minorities have acquiesced, not only with a good grace, but also with a serious design to give the government a fair chance to discover

* A concerted and organized combination among those opposed to the constitution in different parts of the Union, with the view to suspend its operation, or defeat it altogether.

its operation by being carried into effect. I hope and trust that the same liberal disposition prevails with a large proportion of the same description of men in this State. Still, I think there will be great reason for those who are well affected to the government to use their utmost exertions, that the worthiest citizens may be appointed to the two Houses of the first Congress, and, where State elections take place previous to this choice, that the same principle may govern in these also. For much will doubtless depend on their prudence in conducting business at the beginning, and reconciling discordant dispositions to a reasonable acquiescence with candid and honest measures. At the same time it will be a point of no common delicacy to make provision for effecting such explanations and amendments, as might be really proper and generally satisfactory, without producing, or at least fostering, such a spirit of innovation as will overturn the whole system.

I earnestly pray, that the Omnipotent Being, who has not deserted the cause of America in the hour of its extremest hazard, may never yield so fair a heritage of freedom a prey to anarchy or despotism.

With sentiments of real regard, I am, &c.

TO JAMES MADISON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 3 August, 1788.

My dear Sir,

Your favors of the 21st and 27th of last month came duly to hand. The latter contained the pleasing, and I may add (though I could not reconcile it to any ideas I entertained of common policy) unexpected account of the unconditional ratification of the

constitution by the State of New York. That North Carolina will hesitate long in its choice, I can scarcely believe; but what Rhode Island will do is more difficult to say, though not worth a conjecture, as the conduct of the majority there has hitherto baffled all calculation.

The place proper for the new Congress to meet at will unquestionably undergo, if it has not already done it, much investigation; but there are certain things, which are so self-evident in their nature as to speak for themselves. This possibly may be one. Where the true point lies I will not undertake to decide; but there can be no hesitation, I think, in pronouncing that in all societies, if the band or cement is strong enough to hold the body together, the several parts should submit to the inconveniences for the benefits which they derive from the conveniences of the compact.*

* *From Mr. Madison's Letter.* — "Congress have deliberated in part on the arrangements for putting the new machine into operation, but have concluded on nothing but the times for choosing electors, &c. Those, who wish to make New York the place of meeting, studiously promote delay; others, who are not swayed by this consideration, do not urge despatch. They think it would be well to let as many States as possible have an opportunity of deciding on the constitution; and, what is of more consequence, they wish to give opportunities, where they can take place, for as many elections of State legislatures as can precede a reasonable time, for making the appointments and arrangements referred to them. If there be too great an interval between the acts of Congress on this subject, and the next election or next meeting of a State legislature, it may afford a pretext for an intermediate summoning of the existing members, who are everywhere less federal than their successors hereafter to be elected will probably be. This is particularly the case in Maryland, where the antifederal temper of the executive would render an intermediate and extraordinary meeting of the Assembly of that State the more likely to be called. On my way through Maryland, I found such an event to be much feared by the friends, and wished by the adversaries, of the constitution. We have no late news from Europe, nor any thing from North Carolina." — *New York, July 21st.*

We have nothing in these parts worth communicating. Towards New York we look for whatever is interesting till the States begin to act under the new form, which will be an important epoch in the annals of this country. With sentiments of sincere friendship and affection, I am yours, &c.

TO JOHN JAY.

Mount Vernon, 3 August, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

The letters which you did me the favor of writing to me on the 17th and 23d of last month from Poughkeepsie came duly to hand, and claim my particular acknowledgments. With peculiar pleasure I now congratulate you on the success of your labors to obtain an unconditional ratification of the proposed constitution in the convention of your State; the account of which was brought to us by the mail of yesterday.

Although I could scarcely conceive it possible, after ten States had adopted the constitution, that New York, separated as it is from the other three, and peculiarly divided in sentiments as it is, would withdraw from the Union, yet, considering the great majority, which appeared to cling together in the convention, and the decided temper of the leaders, I did not, I confess, see the means by which it was to be avoided. The exertion of those, who were able to effect this great work, must have been equally arduous and meritorious. It is to be hoped, that the State of North Carolina will not spend much time in deciding on this question; and as to Rhode Island, its conduct has so far baffled all calculation, that few are disposed to hazard a conjecture thereon. With sentiments of sincere esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO SAMUEL HANSON.

Mount Vernon, 6 August, 1788.

SIR,

On my return home last night I found my nephew Lawrence here, who said he was afraid to remain at your house, and offered to show me some bruises he had received. Being prepared for it, I was going this morning to correct him; but he begged so earnestly and promised so faithfully, that there should be no cause of complaint against him for the future, that I have suspended the punishment.

The letter, which I have written to his brother on the subject, is under this cover, and open for your perusal. He is arrived at such an age and size now, as to be a better subject to be reasoned with than to receive corporal punishment; and my primary object in placing these boys with you last was, that they, at least George, should be treated more on the footing of friendship and as companions, than as mere schoolboys. This I hoped would draw George's attention to objects and conversations, that would improve and might contribute in a degree to wean him from boyish amusements, the influence of which would extend to Lawrence.

Necessary and decent clothes they shall have no cause to complain for the want of; and if you, Sir, once a month, or oftener, would be so obliging as to inspect them and let me know what they need, I will take care that they shall be provided. A line from one of them, lodged at the post, signifying their desire of sending things to my tailor to repair, will induce the occasional call of a servant, who may be sent to town on other business. With esteem, I am, &c.

TO GEORGE S. WASHINGTON.

Mount Vernon, 6 August, 1788.

DEAR GEORGE,

It was with equal pain and surprise, that I was informed by Colonel Hanson on Monday last of your unjustifiable behaviour in rescuing your brother from that chastisement, which was due to his improper conduct; and which you know, because you have been told it in explicit language, he was authorized to administer whenever he should deserve it. Such refractory behaviour on your part I consider as an insult equally offered to myself, after the above communications; and I shall continue to view it in that light, till you have made satisfactory acknowledgments to Colonel Hanson for the offence given him.

It is as much my wish and intention to see justice done to you and your brother, as it is to punish either when it is merited; but there are proper modes by which this is to be obtained, and it is to be sought by a fair and candid representation of facts which can be supported, and not by vague complaints, disobedience, perverseness, or disobliging conduct, which make enemies without producing the smallest good. So often and strenuously have I endeavoured to inculcate this advice, and to show you the advantages, which are to be expected from close application to your studies, that it is unnecessary to repeat it. If the admonitions of friendship are lost, other methods must be tried, which cannot be more disagreeable to you, than they would be to one, who wishes to avoid them, who is solicitous to see you and your brother (the only remaining sons of your father) turn out well, and who is very desirous of continuing your affectionate uncle.

TO CHARLES PETTIT.

Mount Vernon, 16 August, 1788.

SIR,

I have to acknowledge with much sensibility the receipt of your letter, dated the 5th instant, in which you offer your congratulations on the prospect of an established government, whose principles seem calculated to secure the benefits of society to the citizens of the United States, and in which you also give a more accurate state of federal politics in Pennsylvania than I had before received. It affords me unfeigned satisfaction to find, that the acrimony of parties is much abated.

Doubtless there are defects in the proposed system, which may be remedied in a constitutional mode. I am truly pleased to learn, that those, who have been considered as its most violent opposers, will not only acquiesce peaceably, but coöperate in its organization, and content themselves with asking amendments in the manner prescribed by the constitution. The great danger in my view was, that every thing might be thrown into the last stage of confusion before any government whatsoever could be established, and that we should suffer a political shipwreck without the aid of one friendly star to guide us into port. Every real patriot must have lamented, that private feuds and local politics should have unhappily insinuated themselves into, and in some measure obstructed, the discussion of a great national question. A just opinion, that the people when rightly informed will decide in a proper manner, ought certainly to have prevented all intemperate or precipitate proceedings on a subject of so much magnitude; nor should a regard to common decency have suffered the zealots in the minority

to stigmatize the authors of the constitution as conspirators and traitors. However unfavorably individuals, blinded by passion and prejudice, might have thought of the characters who composed the convention, the election of those characters by the legislatures of the several States, and the reference of their proceedings to the free determination of their constituents, did not carry the appearance of a private combination to destroy the liberties of their country. Nor did the outrageous disposition, which some indulged in traducing and vilifying the members, seem much calculated to produce concord or accommodation.

For myself, I expected not to be exempted from obloquy any more than others. It is the lot of humanity. But if the shafts of malice had been aimed at me in ever so pointed a manner on this occasion, shielded as I was by a consciousness of having acted in conformity to what I believed my duty, they would have fallen blunted from their mark. It is known to some of my countrymen, and can be demonstrated to the conviction of all, that I was in a manner constrained to attend the general convention, in compliance with the earnest and pressing desires of many of the most respectable characters in different parts of the continent.

At my age, and in my circumstances, what sinister object or personal emolument had I to seek after in this life? The growing infirmities of age, and the increasing love of retirement, daily confirm my decided predilection for domestic life; and the great Searcher of human hearts is my witness, that I have no wish, which aspires beyond the humble and happy lot of living and dying a private citizen on my own farm.

Your candor and patriōtism in endeavouring to mod-

erate the jealousies and remove the prejudices, which a particular class of citizens had conceived against the new government, are certainly very commendable, and must be viewed as such by all true friends to their country. In this description I shall fondly hope I have a right to comprehend myself; and shall conclude by professing a grateful sense of your favorable opinion for me. I am, &c.

TO COUNT DE MOUSTIER.

Mount Vernon, 17 August, 1788.

SIR,

In the letter I did myself the honor to address to your Excellency on the 26th of last March, I intimated that as soon as I should have obtained more particular information concerning the commercial intercourse between France and the United States, I would most willingly communicate the result. Ill prepared as I still am to treat of a subject so complicated in its nature, and so extensive in its consequences, I will now hazard a few facts and general observations, without confining myself strictly to your questions, to which, however, there will be a constant allusion.

Respecting the utility or hurtfulness of the tobacco contract between Mr. Morris and the Farmers-General, I have heard so many specious arguments on one side and the other, that I find myself embarrassed in making a fair judgment. In ordinary cases I know that all exclusive privileges and even partial monopolies are pernicious. How far in this instance the contract has been only a transference of the business from the foreign agents, English or Scottish, who used to conduct it, into other hands, and whether the same

exportations in quantity would have been made directly to France through more advantageous channels, I cannot pretend to determine. A free competition in the purchase of that article here, as well as in the sale at the place of market, it seems reasonable to conclude, would be mutually beneficial to both nations, however it might be inconvenient to individuals. Though the present contract will soon expire of course, and leave an equal field for speculation on this side of the Atlantic, I have been taught to believe, that the Farmers-General will not so readily give up their share in the monopoly on the other. So the business must in all probability revert to its original channel.

In reply to your second, third, and fourth questions, I would only briefly observe, that we are yet scarcely sufficiently acquainted with the coarse French woollens, and their lowest prices, to determine how far they come in rivalship with those of Britain. The prevailing opinion is in favor of the latter; but I see no reason why the former, when calculated for the particular purpose, may not be made equally cheap and good. As to other articles of importation directly from France, they might consist in superfine broadcloths, particularly blue, which can be afforded cheaper and better than from England, glass, gloves, ribbons, silks, cambrics, plain lawns, linens, printed goods, wine, brandy, oil, fruit, and in general every thing necessary for carrying on the Indian trade; from the Islands, sugar and coffee, in addition to the molasses and rum, which alone are permitted to be exported to the United States at present. Our produce in return to Europe might comprehend tobacco (as the staple from this State), and from the States aggregately wheat, rice, other grain, bread, flour, fish, fish oil, potashes, pearlashes, skins, furs, peltry, indigo, madder, different

dyeing woods, lumber, naval stores, iron, coals, and ships ready built; to the Islands, lumber, bar iron, coals, live stock, and provisions of all kinds.

It may be mentioned here as a first principle of extending the intercourse, and as a theory which will be found incontestably true in experiment, that, in proportion as France shall increase the facility of our making remittances, in the same ratio shall we increase the consumption of her produce and manufactures. Common sense and sound policy speak thus on our part; "We can furnish new materials of great value, and our ability to do it will augment with our population every day; we want no money for them, and we desire no credit may be given to us; we cannot manufacture fine articles so cheaply as we can import them, and must, while we continue an agricultural people, be supplied from some quarter; we offer you the preference, and will take different goods to the amount received from us in our staple commodities."

This doctrine has been already verified, so far as an opportunity has been afforded to observe the effect. The use of French brandy in common taverns, as well as private houses, has been substituted for two or three years past very much in the place of Jamaica rum. Probably not less than twenty-four thousand gallons have been imported into this State in one year. The consumption of French wines is also much greater than it has formerly been; and it may, by a moderate calculation, amount to between one half and one third of all that is imported. The demand for both these articles might still be extended with the means of making remittances. Not much French salt is made use of for curing provisions in Virginia. The opinion is, that it is not so clean as that imported

from other parts of Europe. If it was properly purified, it might and certainly would be brought out as ballast in great quantities, and find a ready market.

About half the exports from Virginia are carried in American bottoms, the remainder principally in British bottoms. There is, however, a number of other foreign vessels employed in the trade.

I know not of any other equivalents, than those to be derived by France from the extension of her commerce, which we can give for any new favors in your Islands. Under the present rigorous restrictions, it is thought that trade is unprofitable for us, and will decay or be disused as soon as other avenues for receiving our produce shall be gradually opened. The maritime genius of this country is now steering our vessels in every ocean; to the East Indies, the north-west coasts of America, and the extremities of the globe. I have the best evidence, that the scale of commerce, so long against us, is beginning to turn in our favor, and that, as a new thing in our new world, the amount of exports from one State last year exceeded that of the imports more than two hundred and thirty thousand pounds.

What change in systems, and amelioration in the general complexion of our affairs, are likely to be produced in consequence of the national government, which is on the eve of being established, I will not undertake to predict. I hope and trust the ties, which connect this nation with France, will be strengthened and made durable by it. In the mean time there are three things, which I flatter myself will counterbalance, on the side of the French commerce, the three advantages, of which I conceive the British merchants to be possessed. The circumstances to which I allude are, first, the increasing prejudices of this country

against a commercial intercourse with England, occasioned by provocations and augmented by impositions on her part; secondly, the facility given in many instances by the French government for our making remittances in the staple commodities of this country; and, thirdly, the change of taste in favor of articles produced or manufactured in France, which may indeed in a great degree be attributed to the affection and gratitude still felt for her generous interposition in our favor.

I should be truly happy to learn, that this country and its inhabitants have become agreeable to your Excellency upon acquaintance. For you may be assured, Sir, no one can be more zealous than myself in promoting a friendly connexion between our nations, or in rendering your situation perfectly satisfactory, while the United States shall enjoy the benefit of your residence in them. With the highest consideration and respect, I have the honor to be, &c.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 28 August, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I received with your letter of the 9th instant, one from Mr. Minot, and also his *History of the Insurrections in Massachusetts*. The work seems to be executed with ingenuity, as well as calculated to place facts in a true point of view, obviate the prejudices of those, who are unacquainted with the circumstances, and answer good purposes in respect to our government in general. I have returned him my thanks for his present by this conveyance.

The public appears to be anxiously waiting for the

decision of Congress respecting the place for convening the national assembly under the new government, and the ordinance for its organization. Methinks it is a great misfortune, that local interests should involve themselves with federal concerns at this moment.

So far as I am able to learn, federal principles are gaining ground considerably. The declaration of some of the most respectable characters in this State (I mean of those who were opposed to the government) is now explicit, that they will give the constitution a fair chance by affording it all the support in their power. Even in Pennsylvania, the minority, who were more violent than in any other place, say they will only seek for amendments in the mode pointed out by the constitution itself.

I will, however, just mention by way of *caveat*, that there are suggestions, that attempts will be made to procure the election of a number of antifederal characters to the first Congress, in order to embarrass the wheels of government, and produce premature alterations in its constitution. Whether these hints, which have come through different channels, may be well or ill-founded, I know not; but it will be advisable, I should think, for the federalists to be on their guard, so far as not to suffer any secret machinations to prevail, without taking measures to frustrate them. That many amendments and explanations might and should take place, I have no difficulty in conceding; but I will confess my apprehension is, that the New York circucular letter is intended to bring on a general convention at too early a period, and, in short, by referring the subject to the legislatures, to set every thing afloat again. I wish I may be mistaken in imagining, that there are persons, who, upon finding they could not carry their point by an open attack upon the consti-

tution, have some sinister designs to be silently effected if possible. But I trust in that Providence, which has saved us in six troubles, yea, in seven, to rescue us again from any imminent though unseen dangers. Nothing, however, on our part ought to be left undone. I conceive it to be of unspeakable importance, that whatever there be of wisdom, and prudence, and patriotism on the continent, should be concentred in the public councils at the outset. I am, &c.

TO ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

Mount Vernon, 28 August, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I have had the pleasure to receive your letter dated the 13th, accompanied by one addressed to General Morgan. I will forward the letter to General Morgan by the first conveyance, and add my particular wishes, that he would comply with the request contained in it. Although I can scarcely imagine how the watch of a British officer, killed within their lines, should have fallen into his hands, who was many miles distant from the scene of action, yet, if it so happened, I flatter myself there will be no reluctance or delay in restoring it to the family.

As the perusal of the political papers under the signature of PUBLIUS has afforded me great satisfaction, I shall certainly consider them as claiming a most distinguished place in my library. I have read every performance, which has been printed on one side and the other of the great question lately agitated, so far as I have been able to obtain them; and, without an unmeaning compliment, I will say, that I have seen no other so well calculated, in my judgment, to pro-

duce conviction on an unbiassed mind, as the production of your *triumvirate.* When the transient circumstances and fugitive performances, which attended this crisis, shall have disappeared, that work will merit the notice of posterity, because in it are candidly and ably discussed the principles of freedom and the topics of government, which will be always interesting to mankind, so long as they shall be connected in civil society.

The circular letter from your convention I presume was the equivalent, by which you obtained an acquiescence in the proposed constitution. Notwithstanding I am not very well satisfied with the tendency of it, yet the federal affairs had proceeded, with few exceptions, in so good a train, that I hope the political machine may be put in motion, without much effort or hazard of miscarrying.*

On the delicate subject with which you conclude your letter, I can say nothing, because the event alluded to may never happen, and because, in case it should

* On this topic Mr. Madison wrote; "You will have seen the circular letter from the convention of this State. It has a pestilent tendency. If an early general convention cannot be parried, it is seriously to be feared, that the system, which has resisted so many direct attacks, may be at last successfully undermined by its enemies. It is now perhaps to be wished, that Rhode Island may not accede, till this new crisis of danger shall be over. Some think it would have been better, if New York had held out till the operation of the government could have dissipated the fears, which artifice had created, and the attempts resulting from those fears and artifices." — *New York, August 11th.* This circular letter was sent by the convention of New York to the legislatures of the several States, recommending that a new general convention should be called for the purpose of taking into consideration various amendments to the constitution. See the letter in the *American Museum*, Vol. IV. p. 158. Although the Virginia convention ratified the constitution by a small majority only, yet it did not follow the example of New York in this particular. The Assembly convened soon afterwards, however, and adopted strong resolutions to the same effect, and sent an application to Congress, and a circular letter to the several States, recommending another general convention. — WIRT'S *Life of Patrick Henry*, pp. 299–311.

occur, it would be a point of prudence to defer forming one's ultimate and irrevocable decision, so long as new data might be afforded for one to act with the greater wisdom and propriety. I would not wish to conceal my prevailing sentiment from you; for you know me well enough, my good Sir, to be persuaded, that I am not guilty of affectation when I tell you, that it is my great and sole desire to live and die in peace and retirement on my own farm. Were it even indispensable, that a different line of conduct should be adopted, while you and some others who are acquainted with my heart would acquit, the world and posterity might possibly accuse me of inconsistency and ambition. Still I hope I shall always possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain, what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of *an honest man*, as well as prove, what I desire to be considered in reality, that

I am, with great sincerity and esteem,
Dear Sir, &c.*

TO JOHN MANDRILLON.

Mount Vernon, 29 August, 1788.

SIR,

I have lately received with a grateful sensibility the *Miscellaneous Collection* in verse and prose, which you have had the goodness to send to me, accompanied

* *From Colonel Hamilton's Letter.* — "I take it for granted, Sir, you have concluded to comply with what will, no doubt, be the general call of your country in relation to the new government. You will permit me to say, that it is indispensable you should lend yourself to its first operations. It is to little purpose to have introduced a system, if the weightiest influence is not given to its firm establishment in the outset." — *August 13th.*

by your letter under date of May 24th; for both of which I pray you to accept my warmest thanks.

But, Sir, I consider you as a patriot of the world, earnestly solicitous for the freedom and prosperity of all nations. And I should do injustice to my feelings, not to go beyond common expressions of personal civility in testifying my sense of the uniform and able exertions you have made, in favor of the cause and reputation of the United States of America. Your honest endeavours to confute the erroneous reports, that had been scattered in Europe, respecting the partial commotions in Massachusetts, were truly laudable, and merit the applause of every patriot. As I know of no European character better calculated, or more disposed, to make good use of an authentic history of the insurrections in Massachusetts, ——* It possesses the merit of being written with simplicity and impartiality, and will tend to destroy the idle opinions that were propagated in the English newspapers on the subject. All the accounts of our being in great jeopardy from a war with the savages are equally groundless, and seem principally designed to deter people from migrating to America.

We flatter ourselves, that your patriotic wishes and sanguine hopes, respecting the political felicity of this country, will not prove abortive. We hope, from the general acquiescence of the States so far, with small exceptions, in the proposed constitution, that the foundation is laid for the enjoyment of much purer civil liberty, and greater public happiness, than have hitherto been the portion of mankind. And we trust the western world will yet verify the predictions of its friends,

* Here is evidently an omission in the recorded letter. The allusion is probably to MINOT'S *History of the Insurrections*, sent by General Washington to M. Mandrillon.

and prove an asylum for the persecuted of all nations. With sentiments of great esteem and respect, I have the honor to be, &c.

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Mount Vernon, 31 August, 1788.

SIR,

I was very much gratified a little time ago by the receipt of your letter dated the 2d of May. You have my best thanks for the political information contained in it, as well as for the satisfactory account of the canal of Languedoc. It gives me great pleasure to be made acquainted with the particulars of that stupendous work, though I do not expect to derive any but speculative advantages from it.

When America will be able to embark in projects of such pecuniary extent, I know not; probably not for very many years to come; but it will be a good example, and not without its use, if we can carry our present undertakings happily into effect. Of this we have now the fairest prospect. Notwithstanding the real scarcity of money, and the difficulty of collecting it, the laborers employed by the Potomac Company have made very great progress in removing the obstructions at the Shenandoah, Seneca, and Great Falls; insomuch that, if this summer had not proved unusually rainy, and if we could have had a favorable autumn, the navigation might have been sufficiently opened (though not completed) for boats to pass from Fort Cumberland to within nine miles of a shipping port, by the first of January next. There remains now no doubt of the practicability of the plan, or that, upon the ulterior operations being performed, this will become

the great avenue into the western country; a country which is now settling in an extraordinarily rapid manner, under uncommonly favorable circumstances, and which promises to afford a capacious asylum for the poor and persecuted of the earth.

I do not pretend to judge how far the flames of war, which are kindled in the north of Europe, may be scattered, or how soon they will be extinguished. The European politics have taken so strange a turn, and the nations formerly allied have become so curiously severed, that there are fewer sure premises for calculation, than are usually afforded even on this precarious and doubtful subject. But it appears probable to me, that peace will either take place this year, or hostility be greatly extended in the course of the next. The want of a hearty coöperation between the two imperial powers against the Porte, or the failure of success from any other cause, may accelerate the first contingency. The irritable state, into which several of the other potentates seem to have been drawn, may open the way to the second. Hitherto the event of the contest has proved different from the general expectation. If in our speculations we might count upon discipline, system, and resources, and certainly these generally give decisive advantages in war, I had thought full surely the Turks must at least be driven out of Europe.

Is it not unaccountable, that the Russians and Germans combined are not able to effect so much as the former did alone in the late war? But perhaps these things are all for the best, and may afford room for pacification. I am glad our Commodore Paul Jones has got employment, and heartily wish him success. His new situation may possibly render his talents and services more useful to us at some future day. I was

unapprized of the circumstances, which you mention, that Congress had once in contemplation to give him promotion. They will doubtless judge now how far it may be expedient.*

By what we can learn from the late foreign gazettes, affairs seem to have come nearly to a crisis in France, and I hope they are beginning to meliorate. Should the contest between the King and the parliaments result in a well-constituted national assembly, it must ultimately be a happy event for the kingdom. But I fear that kingdom will not recover its reputation and influence with the Dutch for a long time to come. Combinations appear also to be forming in other quarters. It is reported by the last European accounts, that England has actually entered into a treaty with Russia, and that the French ambassador at the court of London has asked to be informed of its tenor. In whatever manner the nations of Europe shall endeavour to keep up their prowess in war, and their balance of power in peace, it will be obviously our policy to cultivate tranquillity at home and abroad; and to extend our agriculture and commerce as far as possible.

I am much obliged by the information you gave respecting the credit of different nations among the Dutch money-holders, and fully accord with you in regard to the manner in which our own ought to be used. I am strongly impressed with the expediency of establishing our national faith beyond imputation, and of having recourse to loans only on critical occa-

* The Empress of Russia had recently called Paul Jones into her service, to take part in the war against the Turks, and promised him the rank of rear-admiral. Mr. Jefferson said, that Congress had it once in contemplation to confer on him the rank of admiral, which was to date from the time of his taking the Serapis, and suggested that such a step might still be an act of policy.

sions. Your proposal for transferring the whole foreign debt to Holland is highly worthy of consideration. I feel mortified, that there should have been any just ground for the clamor of the foreign officers, who served with us; but, after having received a quarter of their whole debt in specie, and their interest in the same for some time, they have infinitely less reason for complaint than our native officers, of whom the suffering and neglect have been equalled only by their patience and patriotism. A great proportion of the officers and soldiers of the American army have been compelled by indigence to part with their securities for one eighth of the nominal value; yet their conduct is very different from what you represented that of the French officers to have been.

The merits and defects of the proposed constitution have been largely and ably discussed. For myself, I was ready to embrace any tolerable compromise, that was competent to save us from impending ruin; and I can say there are scarcely any of the amendments, which have been suggested, to which I have much objection, except that which goes to the prevention of direct taxation. And that, I presume, will be more strenuously advocated and insisted upon hereafter, than any other. I had indulged the expectation, that the new government would enable those entrusted with its administration to do justice to the public creditors, and retrieve the national character. But, if no means are to be employed but requisitions, that expectation was vain, and we may as well recur to the old confederation. If the system can be put in operation, without touching much the pockets of the people, perhaps it may be done; but, in my judgment, infinite circumspection and prudence are yet necessary in the experiment. It is nearly impossible for any one,

who has not been on the spot, to conceive what the delicacy and danger of our situation have been. Though the peril is not past entirely, thank God the prospect is somewhat brightening.

You will probably have heard, before the receipt of this letter, that the general government has been adopted by eleven States, and that the actual Congress have been prevented from issuing their ordinance for carrying it into execution, in consequence of a dispute about the place at which the future Congress shall meet. It is probable, that Philadelphia or New York will soon be agreed upon.

I will just touch on the bright side of our national state, before I conclude; and we may perhaps rejoice, that the people have been ripened by misfortune for the reception of a good government. They are emerging from the gulf of dissipation and debt, into which they had precipitated themselves at the close of the war. Economy and industry are evidently gaining ground. Not only agriculture, but even manufactures, are much more attended to than formerly. Notwithstanding the shackles under which our trade in general labors, commerce to the East Indies is prosecuted with considerable success. Salted provisions and other produce, particularly from Massachusetts, have found an advantageous market there. The voyages are so much shorter, and the vessels are navigated at so much less expense, that we may hope to rival and supply, at least through the West Indies, some part of Europe with commodities from thence. This year the exports from Massachusetts have amounted to a great deal more than their imports. I wish this was the case everywhere.

On the subject of our commerce with France, I have received several queries from the Count de Mous-

tier. Besides the information he desired relative to articles of importation from and exportation to France, he wished to know my opinion of the advantage or detriment of the contract between Mr. Morris and the Farmers-General, as also what emoluments we had to give in return for the favors we solicited in our intercourse with the Islands. As I knew that these topics were also in agitation in France, I gave him the most faithful and satisfactory advice I could; but in such a cautious manner, as might not be likely to contradict your assertions or impede your negotiations in Europe. I am, &c.

TO HENRY LEE, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 22 September, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

Your letter of the 13th instant was of so friendly and confidential a complexion, as to merit my early attention and cordial acknowledgments.* I am glad Congress have at last decided upon an ordinance for carrying the new government into execution. In my mind the place for the meeting of the new Congress was not an object of such very important consequence; but I greatly fear, that the question entailed upon that body, respecting their permanent residence, will be pregnant with difficulty and danger. God grant that true patriotism and a spirit of moderation may exclude a narrow locality, and all ideas unfriendly to the Union, from every quarter.

Your observations on the solemnity of the crisis, and its application to myself, bring before me subjects

---

* See this letter in the APPENDIX, No. VII.

of the most momentous and interesting nature. In our endeavours to establish a new general government, the contest, nationally considered, seems not to have been so much for glory as existence. It was for a long time doubtful whether we were to survive as an independent republic, or decline from our federal dignity into insignificant and wretched fragments of an empire. The adoption of the constitution so extensively, and with so liberal an acquiescence on the part of the minorities in general, promised the former; until lately the circular letter of New York carried, in my apprehension, an unfavorable if not an insidious tendency to a contrary policy. I still hope for the best; but, before you mentioned it, I could not help fearing it would serve as a standard to which the disaffected might resort. It is now evidently the part of all honest men, who are friends to the new constitution, to endeavour to give it a chance to disclose its merits and defects, by carrying it fairly into effect in the first instance. For it is to be apprehended, that, by an attempt to obtain amendments before the experiment has been candidly made, "more is meant than meets the ear," that an intention is concealed to accomplish slily what could not have been done openly, to undo all that has been done.

If the fact so exists, that a kind of combination is forming to stifle the government in embryo, it is a happy circumstance that the design has become suspected. Preparations should be the sure attendant upon forewarning. Probably prudence, wisdom, and patriotism were never more essentially necessary, than at the present moment; and so far as it can be done in an irreproachably direct manner, no effort ought to be left unessayed to procure the election of the best possible characters to the new Congress. On their

harmony, deliberation, and decision every thing will depend. I heartily wish Mr. Madison was in our Assembly, as I think with you it is of unspeakable importance that Virginia should set out with her federal measures under right auspices.

The principal topic of your letter is to me a point of great delicacy indeed, insomuch that I can scarcely without some impropriety touch upon it. In the first place, the event to which you allude may never happen; among other reasons, because, if the partiality of my fellow citizens conceive it to be a means by which the sinews of the new government are to be strengthened, it will of consequence be obnoxious to those, who are in opposition to it, many of whom unquestionably will be placed among the electors.

This consideration alone would supersede the expediency of announcing any definitive and irrevocable resolution. You are among the small number of those, who know my invincible attachment to domestic life, and that my sincerest wish is to continue in the enjoyment of it solely until my final hour. But the world would be neither so well instructed, nor so candidly disposed, as to believe me uninfluenced by sinister motives, in case any circumstance should render a deviation from the line of conduct I had prescribed to myself indispensable.

Should the contingency you suggest take place, and (for argument's sake alone let me say it) should my unfeigned reluctance to accept the office be overcome by a deference for the reasons and opinions of my friends, might I not, after the declarations I have made (and Heaven knows they were made in the sincerity of my heart), in the judgment of the impartial world and of posterity, be chargeable with levity and inconsistency, if not with rashness and ambition? Nay

farther, would there not be some apparent foundation for the two former charges? Now justice to myself and tranquillity of conscience require, that I should act a part, if not above imputation, at least capable of vindication. Nor will you conceive me to be too solicitous for reputation. Though I prize as I ought the good opinion of my fellow citizens, yet, if I know myself, I would not seek or retain popularity at the expense of one social duty or moral virtue.

While doing what my conscience informed me was right, as it respected my God, my country, and myself, I could despise all the party clamor and unjust censure, which might be expected from some, whose personal enmity might be occasioned by their hostility to the government. I am conscious, that I fear alone to give any real occasion for obloquy, and that I do not dread to meet with unmerited reproach. And certain I am, whensoever I shall be convinced the good of my country requires my reputation to be put in risk, regard for my own fame will not come in competition with an object of so much magnitude. If I declined the task, it would lie upon quite another principle. Notwithstanding my advanced season of life, my increasing fondness for agricultural amusements, and my growing love of retirement, augment and confirm my decided predilection for the character of a private citizen, yet it would be no one of these motives, nor the hazard to which my former reputation might be exposed, nor the terror of encountering new fatigues and troubles, that would deter me from an acceptance; but a belief, that some other person, who had less pretence and less inclination to be excused, could execute all the duties full as satisfactorily as myself. To say more would be indiscreet; as a disclosure of a refusal beforehand might incur the appli-

cation of the fable in which the fox is represented as undervaluing the grapes he could not reach. You will perceive, my dear Sir, by what is here observed, which you will be pleased to consider in the light of a confidential communication, that my inclinations will dispose and decide me to remain as I am, unless a clear and insurmountable conviction should be impressed on my mind, that some very disagreeable consequences must, in all human probability, result from the indulgence of my wishes.

If you return by land, I shall expect without failure the pleasure of your company. I am much indebted to you for your obliging offer of forwarding such articles as I might want from New York, though I shall not have occasion at this moment to avail myself of your goodness. With great regard and esteem,

I am, &c.

TO JAMES MADISON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 23 September, 1788.

My dear Sir,

I duly received your letter of the 24th of last month; but, as we had no intelligence or circumstance in this quarter worthy of your acceptance, I postponed even the acknowledgment until I was gratified by the receipt of your subsequent favor of the 14th instant. Indeed I have now little more to give you in return than this information to prevent your apprehension of miscarriage, and my thanks for your illustration of the subject, which has lately engaged the attention of Congress.*

---

* See Appendix, No. VII.

Upon mature reflection, I think the reasons you offer in favor of Philadelphia, as the place for the first meeting of Congress, are conclusive; especially when the farther agitation of the question respecting its permanent residence is taken into consideration. I cannot, however, avoid being satisfied, that the minority should have acquiesced in any plan, rather than have prevented the system from being carried into effect. The delay had already become the source of clamors, and might have given advantages to the antifederalists. Their expedient will now probably be an attempt to procure the election of so many of their own junto under the new government, as, by the introduction of local and embarrassing disputes, to impede or frustrate its operations.

In the mean time it behoves all the advocates of the constitution, forgetting partial and smaller considerations, to combine their exertions for collecting the wisdom and virtue of the continent to one centre; in order that the republic may avail itself of the opportunity for escaping from anarchy, division, and the other great national calamities that impend. To be shipwrecked in sight of the port would be the severest of all possible aggravations to our misery, and I assure you I am under painful apprehensions from the single circumstance of Mr. H.* having the whole game to play in the Assembly of this State; and the effect it may have in others should be counteracted if possible. I am, &c.

* Patrick Henry.

TO ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

Mount Vernon, 3 October, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

In acknowledging the receipt of your candid and kind letter by the last post, little more is incumbent upon me than to thank you sincerely for the frankness with which you communicated your sentiments, and to assure you that the same manly tone of intercourse will always be more than barely welcome; indeed it will be highly acceptable to me. I am particularly glad in the present instance, that you have dealt thus freely and like a friend.*

* In reply to General Washington's remarks in his letter of the 28th of August, respecting the probability of his being elected the first president of the United States, Colonel Hamilton had written as follows.

"I should be deeply pained, my dear Sir, if your scruples in regard to a certain station should be matured into a resolution to decline it; though I am neither surprised at their existence, nor can I but agree in opinion that the caution you observe in deferring the ultimate determination is prudent. I have, however, reflected maturely on the subject, and have come to a conclusion (in which I feel no hesitation), that every public and personal consideration will demand from you an acquiescence in what will *certainly* be the unanimous wish of your country.

"The absolute retreat, which you meditated at the close of the late war, was natural and proper. Had the government produced by the revolution gone on in a *tolerable* train, it would have been most advisable to have persisted in that retreat. But I am clearly of opinion, that the crisis, which brought you again into public view, left you no alternative but to comply; and I am equally clear in the opinion, that you are by that act *pledged* to take a part in the execution of the government. I am not less convinced, that the impression of the necessity of your filling the station in question is so universal, that you run no risk of any uncandid imputation by submitting to it. But, even if this were not the case, a regard to your own reputation, as well as to the public good, calls upon you in the strongest manner to run that risk.

"It cannot be considered as a compliment to say, that on your acceptance of the office of president, the success of the new government in its commencement may materially depend. Your agency and influence will be not less important in preserving it from the future attacks of its enemies, than they have been in recommending it in the first instance to the adoption of the people. Independent of all considerations

Although I could not help observing, from several publications and letters, that my name had been sometimes spoken of, and that it was possible the contingency which is the subject of your letter might happen, yet I thought it best to maintain a guarded silence, and to lack the counsel of my best friends, which I certainly hold in the highest estimation, rather than to hazard an imputation unfriendly to the delicacy of my feelings. For, situated as I am, I could hardly bring the question into the slightest discussion, or ask an opinion even in the most confidential man-

---

drawn from this source, the point of light in which you stand at home and abroad will make an infinite difference in the respectability with which the government will begin its operations, in the alternative of your being or not being at the head of it. I forbear to mention considerations which might have a more personal application. What I have said will suffice for the inferences I mean to draw.

"First; in a matter so essential to the well-being of society as the prosperity of a newly instituted government, a citizen of so much consequence as yourself to its success has no option but to lend his services if called for. Permit me to say, it would be inglorious, in such a situation, not to hazard the glory, however great, which he might have previously acquired.

"Secondly; your signature to the proposed system pledges your judgment for its being such an one as upon the whole was worthy of the public approbation. If it should miscarry, (as men commonly decide from success or the want of it) the blame will in all probability be laid on the system itself. And the framers of it will have to encounter the disrepute of having brought about a revolution in government, without substituting any thing that was worthy of the effort; they pulled down one Utopia, it will be said, to build up another. This view of the subject, if I mistake not, my dear Sir, will suggest to your mind greater hazard to that fame, which must be and ought to be dear to you, in refusing your future aid to the system, than in affording it. I will only add, that in my estimate of the matter, that aid is indispensable.

"I have taken the liberty to express these sentiments, and to lay before you my view of the subject. I doubt not the considerations mentioned have fully occurred to you, and I trust they will finally produce in your mind the same result which exists in mine. I flatter myself the frankness with which I have delivered myself will not be displeasing to you. It has been prompted by motives which you would not disapprove."

ner, without betraying, in my judgment, some impropriety of conduct, or without feeling an apprehension, that a premature display of anxiety might be construed into a vainglorious desire of pushing myself into notice as a candidate. Now, if I am not grossly deceived in myself, I should unfeignedly rejoice in case the electors, by giving their votes in favor of some other person, would save me from the dreaded dilemma of being forced to accept or refuse.

If that may not be, I am in the next place earnestly desirous of searching out the truth, and of knowing whether there does not exist a probability that the government would be just as happily and effectually carried into execution without my aid as with it. I am truly solicitous to obtain all the previous information, which the circumstances will afford, and to determine (when the determination can with propriety be no longer postponed) according to the principles of right reason and the dictates of a clear conscience, without too great a reference to the unforeseen consequences, which may affect my person or reputation. Until that period, I may fairly hold myself open to conviction, though I allow your sentiments to have weight in them; and I shall not pass by your arguments without giving them as dispassionate a consideration as I can possibly bestow.

In taking a survey of the subject, in whatever point of light I have been able to place it, I will not suppress the acknowledgment, my dear Sir, that I have always felt a kind of gloom upon my mind, as often as I have been taught to expect I might, and perhaps must ere long, be called to make a decision. You will, I am well assured, believe the assertion, though I have little expectation it would gain credit from those who are less acquainted with me, that, if I

should receive the appointment, and if I should be prevailed upon to accept it, the acceptance would be attended with more diffidence and reluctance than I ever experienced before in my life. It would be, however, with a fixed and sole determination of lending whatever assistance might be in my power to promote the public weal, in hopes that at a convenient and early period my services might be dispensed with, and that I might be permitted once more to retire, to pass an unclouded evening after the stormy day of life in the bosom of domestic tranquillity.

But why these anticipations? If the friends to the constitution conceive that my administering it will be a means of its acceleration and strength, is it improbable that the adversaries of it may not entertain the same ideas, and of course make it an object of opposition? That many of this description will become electors, I can have no doubt, any more than that their opposition will extend to any character, who, from whatever cause, would be likely to thwart their measures. It might be impolitic in them to make this declaration previous to the election; but I shall be out in my conjectures, if they do not act conformably thereto, and if the seeming moderation, by which they appear to be actuated at present, is either more or less than a finesse to lull and deceive. Their plan of opposition is systematized, and a regular intercourse, I have much reason to believe, between the leaders of it in the several States is formed to render it more effectual. With sentiments of sincere regard and esteem, I have the honor to be, &c.*

* These views produced no change in the sentiments of Colonel Hamilton, in regard to the main topic of discussion. "I feel a conviction," said he in reply, "that you will finally see your acceptance to be indispensable. It is no compliment to say, that no other man can sufficiently unite the

TO COUNT DE MOUSTIER.

Mount Vernon, 18 October, 1788.

SIR,

It was not until last evening, that I had the pleasure of receiving the letter, which your Excellency did me the honor to write to me on the 5th of this month from Boston. So that I could not have an opportunity of returning my acknowledgments before the post, which will depart the 21st from Alexandria to the northward. I hope, however, it will be in time to meet you at New York, or on the road, with assurances that I shall be at home at the period proposed, and that I anticipate very great happiness from your intended visit. The lady,* who has taken so much interest in the new world as to honor it with her presence, may be assured that I shall cordially rejoice in an occasion of demonstrating how welcome she is. I shall also expect, that your nephew and M. Dupont will not fail to lay me under additional obligations by being of your party.

---

public opinion, or can give the requisite weight to the office, in the commencement of the government. These considerations appear to me of themselves decisive. I am not sure that your refusal would not throw every thing into confusion. I am sure that it would have the worst effect imaginable. Indeed, as I hinted in a former letter, I think circumstances leave no option."

Many of General Washington's correspondents touched upon the same subject; and he was made to understand from all quarters, that he was designated in the minds of the people as the first chief magistrate under the new constitution. In writing from Connecticut, Colonel Jonathan Trumbull said, "In the choice of president we have, I believe, no discordant voice. All minds are agreed, and every heart exults in the pleasing prospect of having their wishes so nobly gratified in this first great appointment." — *October 28th.* And Governor Johnson of Maryland wrote; "We cannot, Sir, do without you, and I and thousands more can explain to anybody but yourself why we cannot do without you." — *October 10th.*

* The Marchioness de Brehan.

As I now promise myself in so few days to have the felicity of a personal acquaintance and oral communication with your Excellency, I will not enlarge at this time any further than to express an earnest hope, that you will by travelling have found repeated circumstances to convince you of the good will of the Americans for your nation. Be persuaded, Sir, the slightest suggestion, or the very suspicion, that a few individuals had been wanting in respect to the representative of your sovereign, would have excited a universal indignation against them. Of the sincere desire, which prevails throughout the United States to promote and extend the most liberal intercourse with France on a footing of reciprocal advantage, I flatter myself it would not be more difficult to adduce demonstrations, than of the profound respect and real esteem, with which I have the honor to profess myself to be, Sir, &c.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 26 October, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have been lately favored with the receipt of your letters of the 24th and 30th of September, with their enclosures, and thank you sincerely for your free and friendly communications. As the period is now rapidly approaching, which must decide the fate of the new constitution, as to the manner of its being carried into execution, and probably as to its usefulness, it is not wonderful that we should all feel an unusual degree of anxiety on the occasion. I must acknowledge my fears have been greatly alarmed, but still I am not without hopes. From the good beginning,

that has been made in Pennsylvania, a State from which much was to be feared, I cannot help anticipating well of the others. That is to say, I flatter myself a majority of them will appoint federal members to the several branches of the new government. I should hardly think that Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, South Carolina, and Georgia would be for attempting premature amendments. Some of the rest may also, in all probability, be apprehensive of throwing our affairs into confusion by such ill-timed expedients.

There will, however, be no room for the advocates of the constitution to relax in their exertions; for, if they should be lulled into security, appointments of antifederal men may probably take place, and the consequences, which you so justly dread, be realized. Our Assembly is now in session. It is represented to be rather antifederal, but we have heard nothing of its doings. Mr. Patrick Henry, Mr. R. H. Lee, and Mr. Madison are talked of for the senate. Perhaps as much opposition, or, in other words, as great an effort for early amendments, is to be apprehended from this State as from any but New York. The constant report is, that North Carolina will soon accede to the new Union. A new Assembly is just elected in Maryland, in which it is asserted the number of federalists greatly predominates; and, that being the case, we may look for favorable appointments, in spite of the rancor and activity of a few discontented and, I may say, apparently unprincipled men.

I would willingly pass over in silence that part of your letter in which you mention the persons, who are candidates for the two first offices in the executive, if I did not fear the omission might seem to betray a want of confidence. Motives of delicacy have pre-

vented me hitherto from conversing or writing on this subject, whenever I could avoid it with decency. I may, however, with great sincerity, and I believe without offending against modesty or propriety, say to *you*, that I most heartily wish the choice to which you allude may not fall upon me; and that, if it should, I must reserve to myself the right of making up my final decision at the last moment, when it can be brought into one view, and when the expediency or inexpediency of a refusal can be more judiciously determined than at present. But be assured, my dear Sir, if from any inducement I shall be persuaded ultimately to accept, it will not be (so far as I know my own heart) from any of a private or personal nature. Every personal consideration conspires to rivet me (if I may use the expression) to retirement. At my time of life, and under my circumstances, nothing in this world can ever draw me from it, unless it be a *conviction* that the partiality of my countrymen had made my services absolutely necessary, joined to a *fear* that my refusal might induce a belief that I preferred the conservation of my own reputation and private ease to the good of my country. After all, if I should conceive myself in a manner constrained to accept, I call Heaven to witness, that this very act would be the greatest sacrifice of my personal feelings and wishes, that ever I have been called upon to make. It would be to forego repose and domestic enjoyment, for trouble, perhaps for public obloquy; for I should consider myself as entering upon an unexplored field, enveloped on every side with clouds and darkness.

From this embarrassing situation I had naturally supposed that my declarations at the close of the war would have saved me; and that my sincere intentions, then publicly made known, would have effectu-

ally precluded me for ever afterwards from being looked upon as a candidate for any office. This hope, as a last anchor of worldly happiness in old age, I had still carefully preserved; until the public papers, and private letters from my correspondents in almost every quarter, taught me to apprehend that I might soon be obliged to answer the question, whether I would go again into public life or not.

You will see, my dear Sir, from this train of reflections, that I have lately had enough of my own perplexities to think of, without adverting much to the affairs of others. So much have I been otherwise occupied, and so little agency did I wish to have in electioneering, that I have never entered into a single discussion with any person, nor, to the best of my recollection, expressed a single sentiment orally or in writing, respecting the appointment of a vice-president. From the extent and respectability of Massachusetts, it might reasonably be expected, that one would be chosen from that State. But, having taken it for granted, that the person selected for that important place would be a true federalist, in that case I was altogether disposed to acquiesce in the prevailing sentiments of the electors, without giving any unbecoming preference, or incurring any unnecessary ill will. Since it here seems proper to touch a little more fully upon that point, I will frankly give you my manner of thinking, and what, under certain circumstances, would be my manner of acting.

For this purpose I must speak again hypothetically for argument's sake, and say, supposing I should be appointed to the administration, and supposing I should accept it, I most solemnly declare, that whosoever shall be found to enjoy the confidence of the States, so far as to be elected vice-president, cannot be dis-

agreeable to me in that office. And, even if I had any predilection, I flatter myself I possess patriotism enough to sacrifice it at the shrine of my country; where it will be unavoidably necessary for me to have made infinitely greater sacrifices, before I can find myself in the supposed predicament, that is to say, before I can be connected with others in any possible political relation. In truth I believe, that I have no prejudices on the subject, and that it would not be in the power of any evil-minded persons, who wished to disturb the harmony of those concerned in the government, to infuse them into my mind. For, to continue the same hypothesis one step farther, supposing myself to be connected in office with any gentleman of character, I would most certainly treat him with perfect sincerity and the greatest candor in every respect. I would give him my full confidence, and use my utmost endeavours to coöperate with him in promoting and rendering permanent the national prosperity. This should be my great, my only aim, under the fixed and irrevocable resolution of leaving to other hands the helm of the State, as soon as my services could possibly with propriety be dispensed with.

I have thus, my dear Sir, been led into a longer detail than I intended, and have used more egotism than I could have wished, for which I urge no other apology, than my opinion of your friendship, discretion, and candor. I am, &c.*

* The letter from General Lincoln, dated September 24th, to which the above is chiefly a reply, is contained in the APPENDIX, No. VII.

TO MATTHEW CAREY.

Mount Vernon, 27 October, 1788.

SIR,

In reply to yours of the 20th of this month, I have to observe, that the fragment of the letter in question, supposed to be written by me, is spurious, and that there was a pamphlet containing a great many letters of the same description published in New York at the same time. It should farther be observed, that this publication was made soon after several of my letters were really intercepted with the mail, and that the pretended copies of them not only blended many truths with many falsehoods, but were evidently written by some person exceedingly well acquainted with my domestic and general concerns. Advantage was adroitly taken of this knowledge to give the greater appearance of probability to the fiction.

From these circumstances you will perceive, Sir, how prudently you have acted in making an application to me previous to your meditated republication. Otherwise I might have found myself under the necessity of denying that they were genuine, from an apprehension, that being thus preserved in a manner under my eye and with my acquiescence, they must have assumed the seal of veracity in the estimation of posterity. For, whatever credit some of those letters might be thought to have done to my literary or political talents, I certainly cannot choose to avail myself of the imposition.

With due regard, I am, &c.

TO WILLIAM IRVINE.

Mount Vernon, 31 October, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

The letter with which you favored me, dated the 6th instant, enclosing a sketch of the waters near the line which separates your State from that of New York came duly to hand, for which I offer you my acknowledgments and thanks.

The extensive inland navigation with which this country abounds, and the easy communications which many of the rivers afford with the amazing territory to the westward of us, will certainly be productive of infinite advantage to the Atlantic States, if the legislatures of those through which they pass have liberality and public spirit enough to improve them. For my part, I wish sincerely that every door to that country may be set wide open, that the commercial intercourse with it may be rendered as free and as easy as possible. This in my judgment is the best if not the only cement, that can bind those people to us for any length of time; and we shall, I think, be deficient in foresight and wisdom, if we neglect the means to effect it. Our interest is so much in unison with the policy of the measure, that nothing but that ill-timed and misapplied parsimony and contracted way of thinking, which intermingles so much in all our public councils, can counteract it.

If the Chatauque Lake, at the head of Canewango River, approximates Lake Erie as nearly as is laid down in the draft you sent me, it presents a very short portage indeed between the two, and an access to all those above the latter. I am, &c.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 14 November, 1788.

My dear Sir,

Your letter of the 25th of last month, accompanying the political letters of Mr. Adams, came safely to hand, and I have to acknowledge my obligations for both those favors.

There is good sense in the answers given by Mr. Adams to the questions of Mr. Kalkoen, combined with an extensive knowledge of the interests and resources of this country. If there be in some instances an exaggeration of our force, it is not a matter of wonder; but the tenor of the whole performance rather affords a subject for admiration, that so much accuracy should have been discovered in representations mostly drawn from recollection. Indeed, I was very much pleased with the perusal, and doubt not but the work must have been well calculated to answer the good purposes for which it was intended.

I wrote to you on the 26th of October pretty fully, and therefore shall be more concise at present. Our Assembly, according to different reports, has proved itself to be, as was apprehended, very much under the influence of Mr. Henry. The choice of delegates for the Senate in Congress has fallen upon two gentlemen, who are considered to be rather opposed to the new constitution, namely, Richard Henry Lee, and Colonel Grayson. But notwithstanding they have been both of them solicitous to obtain previous amendments, Colonel Henry Lee told me lately, that Mr. R. H. Lee had declared to him a few days since, that he wished to see the government fairly carried into execution, and that such alterations only should be adopted, as might be found necessary from its errors or defects.

If these were not the very words, the observations were, I think, of that import.

A similar sentiment, I have been credibly informed, has been expressed to more than one person by Colonel Grayson. But the federalists in the Assembly, as I am given to understand, were exceedingly mortified that Mr. Madison should have lost his election by eight or nine votes. It is now much dreaded by the same characters, that the State, which is to be divided into districts for the appointment of representatives to Congress, will be so arranged as to place a large proportion of those, who are called antifederalists, in that station.

I will not add any of my own speculations and conjectures to these facts, but hasten to conclude, as usual, with the strongest protestations of esteem and regard. I am, &c.

P. S. As my last contained some very confidential observations, I hope it has been duly conveyed to you.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 27 November, 1788.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

I wrote to you on the 15th day of September last a very long letter, mostly on speculative and political topics. But as I knew that communication, by going through the French post-office, might be exposed to the inspection of other eyes besides yours, I was careful not to suggest any thing, which it might be imprudent to divulge to the world. A little after sending off that letter, we were first in doubt, and then under great anxiety, about your personal liberty;

as a story prevailed respecting your having broken into the Bastille. Since that time I have been made happy by hearing, that public affairs have taken a more favorable turn in France.

A few weeks ago I was favored with a visit from the minister of France, his sister, her son, and M. Dupont. They have made great journeys this fall, having traversed the whole distance between New Hampshire and this place, and been at the Indian treaty at Fort Schuyler. I can with pleasure inform you, that the Count de Moustier seems at present to be perfectly well satisfied with the country, and to be persuaded that some little uneasinesses about etiquette originated from misunderstanding alone, and not from intention. He appears, also, to be heartily inclined to promote the interests of the two countries, by improving and extending their commercial intercourse. A little after the departure of this party, two other gentlemen of your recommendation, namely, M. Warville * and M. St. Frie, came likewise to Mount Vernon. I found them intelligent, discreet, and disposed to receive favorable impressions of America.

I must now refer you, my dear Marquis, for every species of news here, and for the actual state of politics on this continent, to Mr. Gouverneur Morris, who will have the honor of delivering this letter, and with whose abilities and merits you are too intimately acquainted to require that I should enlarge upon them.

Mrs. Washington and all with us make it a point

* Brissot de Warville, afterwards distinguished for the part he acted in the French revolution. As the fruit of his observations during his travels in America, he published at Paris after his return, *Nouveau Voyage dans les Etats-Unis de l'Amérique Septentrionale*, in three volumes. He also published strictures on Chastellux's *Travels*; and remarks on the independence of the United States as being advantageous to Great Britain.

to annex their compliments to mine, for Madame de Lafayette, yourself, my namesake, and the other children. You will not forget, that I have your promise for bringing Madame de Lafayette to America, whenever you shall gratify it with another visit. I am, &c.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS.

Mount Vernon, 28 November, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I had the pleasure to receive by the last mail your letter dated the 12th of this month. I am much obliged by your offer of executing commissions for me in Europe, and shall take the liberty of charging you with one only. I wish to have a good gold watch procured for my own use; not a small, trifling, nor finically ornamented one, but a watch well executed in point of workmanship, and of about the size and kind of that which was procured by Mr. Jefferson for Mr. Madison, which was large and flat. I imagine Mr. Jefferson can give you the best advice on the subject, as I am told this species of watches, which I have described, can be found cheaper and better fabricated in Paris than in London. To defray the cost I enclose a bill for twenty-five guineas on London, payable at sight. Should the expense be greater, for I would have a good watch, I will take care to reimburse it to you. I want nothing more with it than a handsome key.

In conformity to your suggestion, I enclose to your care letters for the Count de Rochambeau, the Marquis de Chastellux, the Marquis de Lafayette, and Mr. Jefferson, in France; to Lord Fairfax, Mr. Wakelin Welch of London, and Mr. Arthur Young, in England; and

to the Baron Van der Capellan, and M. Mandrillon, in Holland. You must be sensible, that my acquaintances with persons in Europe must either have been formed while they were in this country, or by epistolary communications. Though there are very many persons, from whom I have casually received letters, yet I conceived that an acquaintance with some of them would not be desirable, and that I had scarcely sufficient intimacy with others to send letters of recommendation to them. As it is many years since I have seen the present Lord Fairfax, I have alluded to that circumstance in a letter to him. The character and usefulness of Mr. Young, with whom I have corresponded since the peace, you know perfectly well. M. Mandrillon is a merchant, and a man of letters. He has written many things in favor of America, and seems to be an enthusiast as to the prosperity of this country. The Baron Van der Capellan may be in the land of spirits, for aught I know, not having had a letter from him these five years. I could have addressed a line to M. Dumas, the former agent of the United States at the Hague, but he is too much under a cloud to be of any utility to you. In case your travels should lead you to Ireland, I have given a letter to Sir Edward Newenham. But I apprehend you will have, for all places, as many as you can find occasion for.

As to what you hint respecting myself, towards the close of your letter, I have really but little leisure or inclination to enter on the discussion of a subject so unpleasant to me. You may be persuaded, in the first place, that I hope the choice will not fall upon me; and, in the second, that if it should, and if I can with any degree of propriety decline, I shall certainly contrive to get rid of the acceptance. But if, after all, a kind of inevitable necessity should impel me to a

different fate, it will be time enough to yield to its impulse, when it can no longer be resisted.*

Mrs. Washington joins me in wishes, that you may have a prosperous voyage, and that, when your object shall be accomplished, you may have an equally happy return to your friends. You will always do me the justice to believe, that I remain, with sincere regard, &c.

TO JONATHAN TRUMBULL.

Mount Vernon, 4 December, 1788.

MY DEAR TRUMBULL,

It is some time since I had the pleasure of receiving your favor of the 28th of October; but, as I had nothing particular to send in return, I postponed writing until the present time, to see if any thing new would turn up. Nothing of importance has occurred.

---

* Respecting this topic Mr. Morris replied; — "On the subject, which has closed both your letter and mine, I feel too much not to say something. I have ever thought and said, that you *must* be president; no other man can fill that office. No other man can draw forth the abilities of our country into the various departments of civil life. You alone can awe the insolence of opposing factions, and the greater insolence of assuming adherents. I say nothing of foreign powers, nor of their ministers. With these last you will have some plague. As to your feelings on this occasion, they are, I know, both deep and affecting; you embark property most precious on a most tempestuous ocean; for, as you possess the highest reputation, so you expose it to the perilous chance of popular opinion. On the other hand, you will, I firmly expect, enjoy the inexpressible felicity of contributing to the happiness of all your countrymen. You will become the father of more than three millions of children; and, while your bosom glows with parental tenderness, in theirs, or at least in a majority of them, you will excite the duteous sentiments of filial affection. This, I repeat it, is what I firmly expect; and my views are not directed by that enthusiasm, which your public character has impressed on the public mind. Enthusiasm is generally short-sighted and too often blind. I form my conclusions from those talents and virtues, which the world *believes*, and your friends *know* you possess." — *Philadelphia, December 6th.*

But in the mean time I was extremely happy to find, that your State was going on so well as to federal affairs; and you will permit me to say, that I have been not a little pleased with observing, that your name stood so high in the nomination of representatives to Congress.

In general the appointments to the Senate seem to have been very happy. Much will depend upon having disinterested and respectable characters in both Houses. For, if the new Congress should be composed of characters, in whom the citizens will naturally place a confidence, it will be a most fortunate circumstance for conciliating their good will to the government. And then, if the government can be carried on without touching the purses of the people too deeply, I think it will not be in the power of its adversaries to throw every thing into confusion by effecting premature amendments. A few months, however, will show what we are to expect.

I believe you know me sufficiently well, my dear Trumbull, to conceive, that I am very much perplexed and distressed in my own mind, respecting the subject to which you allude. If I should, unluckily for me, be reduced to the necessity of giving an answer to the question, which you suppose will certainly be put to me, I would fain do what is in all respects best. But how can I know what is best, or on what I shall determine? May Heaven assist me in forming a judgment; for at present I see nothing but clouds and darkness before me. Thus much I may safely say to you in confidence; if ever I should, from any apparent necessity, be induced to go from home in a public character again, it will certainly be the greatest sacrifice of feeling and happiness, that ever was or ever can be made by him, who will have, in all situations, the pleasure to profess himself yours, &c.

TO COUNT DE MOUSTIER.

Mount Vernon, 15 December, 1788.

SIR,

I am now taking up my pen to acknowledge the receipt of the two letters, which your Excellency did me the honor to write to me on the 21st and 26th of last month. While I request you to receive my thanks for the memoirs on the trade of the West Indies, for the memorandum concerning the different kinds of coal tar, and for the dissertation on cements proper for the preservation of perishable substances, I must entreat you to be more especially persuaded of my sensibility for the flattering place I have the satisfaction to hold in your remembrance.

From the badness of the weather after your departure from Mount Vernon, we were all under great anxiety, lest your journey should have been attended with distressing inconveniences, particularly to the delicate constitution of Madame de Brehan. The two Mrs. Washingtons rejoice with me, that it has not been followed with fatal consequences, and hope, that, having had so severe a seasoning, she will find less detriment to her health from the rigors of the approaching winter, than she did from the last. We pray you to make our most cordial good wishes for her health and happiness acceptable to her, with a renewal of our assurances, that we anticipate the purest satisfaction in cultivating the acquaintance, which has been so happily formed, and which was only rendered the less perfect hitherto by the shortness of your visit.

I was in hopes, that, on your arrival at New York, you would have received official and satisfactory intelligence from your country. But, agreeably to the English adage, that "no news is good news," we should

flatter ourselves, that affairs are taking a favorable turn, and that every thing will end to the mutual content of the King and the nation.

Your observations on the revival of the regular communications between France and America, and on the importance of having a precise knowledge of the interests of the two nations more generally diffused, are certainly very just. I cannot but accord with you in earnest expectations, that a good system for the purpose will be speedily instituted. I believe I told you, that I was so little conversant in commercial matters, that I desired but small stress might be placed upon my opinions. It may be necessary to repeat this observation as an apology for what I am about to say on the commerce of this country and the West India Islands. I have every reason to wish, that this trade might, if possible, be made reciprocally beneficial. Of that, however, I entertain some doubts; for hitherto I have thought it of much less importance to the United States, than people commonly imagine it to be. My reasons for this opinion were; first, because I could not learn upon inquiry, that it turned out much, if any, to the advantage of those concerned in it; and, secondly, because all or nearly all the produce imported from thence (cotton excepted) might be considered as articles of luxury, the use of which would in a great measure be dispensed with, if they were not so easily to be obtained. But my chief reason for supposing the trade detrimental to us was, that rum, the principal article received from thence, is the bane of morals and the parent of idleness.

I have been informed, that, before the war, while all the British Islands were wholly open to our vessels and some of those of other nations partly so, the trade, by enabling the adventurers to make a circuitous re-

mittance to Europe, was attended with pretty certain, but very small profits; and that, since the war, it has been generally a losing speculation, even in the State where it has been carried on to the greatest extent, and with more economy in the outfits and navigation than elsewhere. But it will be asked, whether the States, which produce horses, &c., for this trade, would not be greatly injured, in case of its annihilation, for want of a market to dispose of that produce. I answer, that in my judgment it would be better to alter the mode of farming, and to raise sheep and black cattle instead of horses. There can be no want of sufficient demands for wool and beef, nor can I conceive that it would be a difficult affair to substitute the growth of these, in the room of less useful articles. Then I could wish to see the direct commerce with France encouraged to the greatest degree; and that almost all the foreign spirits, which we consume, should consist of the wines and brandies made in that country. The use of those liquors would at least be more innocent to the health and morals of the people, than the thousands of hogsheads of poisonous rum, which are annually consumed in the United States; and upon further reflection it seems obvious to me, that there are articles enough in France, which are wanted here, and others in turn produced here, which are wanted in France, to form the basis of a beneficial, extensive, and desirable commerce.

The discovery of extracting tar from coal is a proof of the investigating genius of the present age.* In

* This kind of tar, according to Count de Moustier, was chiefly used as a varnish for protecting the surface of wood from the effects of the weather. He recommended it to General Washington as a valuable coating for a large barn, which he was then erecting on his plantation near Mount Vernon.

whatever country useful inventions are found out, and improvements made, I rejoice in contemplating, that those inventions or improvements may, in some way or other, be turned to the common good of mankind. The season will be so far advanced before I shall have completely finished covering my barn, that I shall be able to do nothing more to it this year.

I have formerly been somewhat curious in making experiments relative to cements, particularly that, which derives its name from Loriot, but have never been able to succeed to my wishes. I was delighted with the idea, that the cement used by the ancients had been in all probability rediscovered. Some time in the late war I employed three or four of the principal French engineers in our army to make some mortar into a consolidated mass, according to the printed directions for making Loriot's cement, with a copy of which they were furnished. But the result, after very many trials, was infinitely distant from what we had been led to expect. As the process was strictly in conformity to the prescribed rules, I know not to what cause the failure of success should be attributed. With sentiments of esteem and consideration,

I have the honor to be, &c.

TO WILLIAM GORDON.

Mount Vernon, 23 December, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

Your letter dated in London the 24th of September has been duly forwarded to me by your friend Mr. Hazard. As I shall be able to notice the contents but generally and briefly, I request, in the first place, that you will be pleased to accept my best thanks for

your good wishes for my happiness here and hereafter. I am pleased to learn, that your *History* is at length completed. I suppose by the spring we may expect to be favored with a sight of it. Your mentioning the several objects, which you judge of national consequence to the United States, is to be esteemed among the tokens of your kind remembrance of America, and regard to its interests.

I had quite forgotten the private transaction to which you allude, nor could I recall it to mind without much difficulty. If I now recollect rightly, and I believe I do (though there were several applications made to me), I am conscious of only having done my duty. As no particular credit is due for that, and as no good but some harm might result from the publication, the letter, in my judgment, had better remain in concealment.*

The prospect, that a good general government will in all human probability be soon established in America, affords me more substantial satisfaction than I have ever before derived from any political event; because

* The singular modesty of this paragraph will be fully understood, if the reader will recur to the letter alluded to, dated May 22d, 1782, (Vol. VIII. p. 300,) in which General Washington replies to a proposition from a high quarter in the army to make him KING. Dr. Gordon had seen that letter when on a visit to Mount Vernon after the war, and in writing the one, to which the above is an answer, he requested permission to publish it, referring at the same time only to its contents, and the circumstances attending it, without mentioning its date. In speaking of the prospect of General Washington's being the first president of the United States, Dr. Gordon said; "The good of the country is a law, that you must submit to, when you are called to possess a power in the most honorable way by all professions and ranks of people, which, to your everlasting honor when known, you honestly declined with the truest patriotism when offered in an irregular manner. This is a secret, which will remain till you are dead, unless I could be certain of not offending through the publication of your letter, with the suppression of the party to whom it was addressed." — *London, September 24th.*

there is a rational ground for believing, that not only the happiness of my own countrymen, but that of mankind in general, will be promoted by it.

As it is really so long since I have had any occasion to make use of a cipher or key to communicate my sentiments to my correspondents, and as it was so little probable I should ever have any occasion to express them by such modes in future, I have absolutely mislaid or entirely lost yours with others. Besides, I have not a single idea to communicate to any person while in Europe, the knowledge of which could give any advantage to those, who should be curious enough, or mean enough, to inspect my letters.

Thus much I thought it might be well to say, in apology for my not being able to comply with your request. Indeed, when you consider the domestic walk of life in which I pass my days, the multiplicity of private concerns in which I am involved, the numerous epistolary applications from different quarters, the round of company I have at my house, and the avocations occasioned by my being at the head of the Company for clearing the Potomac, you will do me the justice to suppose, that I can have few topics or little time for correspondencies of mere friendship, ceremony, or speculation. This I entreat may be accepted as the true reason, why I am not able to write to you very fully, or very regularly. I remain, &c.

TO HENRY KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 1 January, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have received by the last mail your favor dated the 21st of December, and hasten to return this ac-

knowledgment, together with the enclosed certificate of the service of Major Haskell. I give that testimony with the greatest alacrity, because it always affords me satisfaction, when I can gratify the wishes of a worthy man, in perfect conformity to my own judgment.

I am much pleased to find that the accounts, which I had heard from different quarters, of the increase of federal sentiments are confirmed by your letter. The appointment of senators taken collectively is certainly very happy. I suppose the two gentlemen* appointed by this State are looked upon at the eastward as being included in that class of antifederalists, who wish to cause such great and premature amendments, as will render the government abortive. This idea, I have the best reason to believe, will be found untrue. My belief is founded upon the unequivocal assertions of Colonel Grayson previous to the election, and those of Mr. Richard Henry Lee afterwards. It is also pretty well ascertained, that, if any considerable proportion of the pains shall be taken by the federalists, which will be by the antifederalists, a majority of the representatives from this State to Congress would undoubtedly be composed of the former description. At present, however, it appears very uncertain whether that will be the case or not; as several federalists, who might in all probability be chosen, have, on account of their private affairs, declined standing as candidates; insomuch, that it is to be feared, in some instances, the votes of the advocates for the constitution will be scattered and lost.

From different channels of information it seemed probable to me, even before the receipt of your letter, that Mr. John Adams would be chosen vice-president.

* Richard Henry Lee and William Grayson.

He will doubtless make a very good one; and let whoever may occupy the first seat, I shall be entirely satisfied with that arrangement for filling the second office. I am, &c.*

TO SAMUEL HANSON.

Mount Vernon, 18 January, 1789.

SIR,

It is painful to me to be called upon to give an opinion upon a matter, to which I feel myself incompetent. The first wish of my soul is to spend the evening of my days as a private citizen on my farm; but, if circumstances, which are not yet sufficiently unfolded to form the judgment or the opinion of my friends, will not allow me this last boon of temporal happiness, and I should once more be led into the walks of public life, it is my fixed determination to enter there, not only unfettered by promises, but even unchargeable with creating or feeding the expectation of any man living for my assistance to office. And sure I am, a gentleman of your candor and judgment will approve

---

* As it seemed now to be settled in the public mind, that Washington would be chosen the first president, he was much annoyed by letters soliciting appointments for the writers themselves, or for their friends, under the government which was about to be organized. To a petition of this sort he made the following reply.

"It would take up more time, than I could well spare, to notice the applications which have been made to me in consequence of the new government. In answer to as many as I have been at leisure to acknowledge, I have invariably represented the delicacy of my situation, the impropriety of bringing such things before me, the decided resolution I had formerly made, and the ardent wishes I still entertain of remaining in a private life. You will not then expect, that I should commit myself by saying any thing on a subject, which has never failed to embarrass and distress me beyond measure, whensoever it has been forced upon my consideration." — *January 1st.*

the resolution; first, because all offices are to be created by law, and consequently are as yet uncertain; secondly, because the appointment of officers may possibly be left to the heads of departments, or in many instances referred to the executives of the respective States; and, thirdly, because the ear of the nominator ought to be open to the comments on the merits of each candidate, and to be governed primarily by the abilities, which are most peculiarly adapted to the nature and duties of the office which is to be filled. If, unluckily for me, it should be my lot to have any share in the execution of the government, it will be under the influence of these sentiments, and the best knowledge I can obtain of characters, that I shall invariably act with respect to appointments. And with respect to my conduct as a private man, I do verily believe I never shall interfere in the appointment to any office whatsoever, beyond a general certificate of facts.

The candid and cautious line of conduct, which has been the rule of my past life, and which I mean shall be my government to the end of it, must apologize for the frankness of this declaration. Not, Sir, that I wish it to be considered as indicating any reluctance on my part to promote your interest, in any matter wherein I can do it with perfect consistency and propriety, but rather because I will never put it in the power of any to say, that I have deceived or misled him by assurances or hopes, in the completion of which I might find myself embarrassed. With very great esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Mount Vernon, 29 January, 1789.

My dear Marquis,

By the last post I was favored with the receipt of your letter dated the 5th of September last. Notwithstanding its distant date, it was peculiarly welcome to me; for I had not in the mean time received any satisfactory advices respecting yourself or your country. By that letter my mind was placed much more at its ease, on both those subjects, than it had been for many months.

The last letter, which I had the pleasure of writing to you, was forwarded by Mr. Gouverneur Morris. Since his departure from America, nothing very material has occurred. The minds of men, however, have not been in a stagnant state. But patriotism, instead of faction, has generally agitated them. It is not a matter of wonder, that, in proportion as we approach to the time fixed for the organization and operation of the new government, their anxiety should have been increased, rather than diminished.

The choice of senators, representatives, and electors, which, excepting that of the last description, took place at different times in the different States, has afforded abundant topics for domestic news since the beginning of autumn. I need not enumerate the several particulars, as I imagine you see most of them detailed in the American gazettes. I will content myself with only saying, that the elections have been hitherto vastly more favorable than we could have expected, that federal sentiments seem to be growing with uncommon rapidity, and that this increasing unanimity is not less indicative of the good disposition than the good sense of the Americans. Did it not

savour so much of partiality for my countrymen, I might add, that I cannot help flattering myself, that the new Congress, on account of the self-created respectability and various talents of its members, will not be inferior to any Assembly in the world. From these and some other circumstances I really entertain greater hopes, that America will not finally disappoint the expectations of her friends, than I have at almost any former period. Still, however, in such a fickle state of existence I would not be too sanguine in indulging myself with the contemplation of scenes of uninterrupted prosperity, lest some unforeseen mischance or perverseness should occasion the greater mortification, by blasting the enjoyment in the very bud.

I can say little or nothing new, in consequence of the repetition of your opinion, on the expediency there will be for my accepting the office to which you refer. Your sentiments, indeed, coincide much more nearly with those of my other friends, than with my own feelings. In truth my difficulties increase and multiply as I draw towards the period, when, according to the common belief, it will be necessary for me to give a definitive answer, in one way or another. Should circumstances render it in a manner inevitably necessary to be in the affirmative, be assured, my dear Sir, I shall assume the task with the most unfeigned reluctance, and with a real diffidence, for which I shall probably receive no credit from the world. If I know my own heart, nothing short of a conviction of duty will induce me again to take an active part in public affairs; and, in that case, if I can form a plan for my own conduct, my endeavours shall be unremittingly exerted, even at the hazard of former fame or present popularity, to extricate my country from the embarrassments in which it is entangled through want of

credit; and to establish a general system of policy, which if pursued will ensure permanent felicity to the commonwealth. I think I see a path as clear and as direct as a ray of light, which leads to the attainment of that object. Nothing but harmony, honesty, industry, and frugality are necessary to make us a great and happy people. Happily the present posture of affairs, and the prevailing disposition of my countrymen, promise to coöperate in establishing those four great and essential pillars of public felicity.

What has been considered at the moment as a disadvantage, will probably turn out for our good. While our commerce has been considerably curtailed, for want of that extensive credit formerly given in Europe, and for a default of remittances, the useful arts have been almost imperceptibly pushed to a considerable degree of perfection.

Though I would not force the introduction of manufactures, by extravagant encouragements, and to the prejudice of agriculture, yet I conceive much might be done in that way by women, children, and others, without taking one really necessary hand from tilling the earth. Certain it is, great savings are already made in many articles of apparel, furniture, and consumption. Equally certain it is, that no diminution in agriculture has taken place, at the time when greater and more substantial improvements in manufactures were making, than were ever before known in America. In Pennsylvania they have attended particularly to the fabrication of cotton cloths, hats, and all articles in leather. In Massachusetts, they are establishing factories of duck, cordage, glass, and several other extensive and useful branches. The number of shoes made in one town, and nails in another, is incredible. In that State and Connecticut are also factories of su-

perfine and other broadcloths. I have been writing to our friend General Knox this day to procure me homespun broadcloth of the Hartford fabric, to make a suit of clothes for myself. I hope it will not be a great while before it will be unfashionable for a gentleman to appear in any other dress. Indeed, we have already been too long subject to British prejudices. I use no porter or cheese in my family but such as is made in America. Both those articles may now be purchased of an excellent quality.

While you are quarrelling among yourselves in Europe, while one king is running mad, and others acting as if they were already so, by cutting the throats of the subjects of their neighbours, I think you need not doubt, my dear Marquis, that we shall continue in tranquillity here, and that population will be progressive so long as there shall continue to be so many easy means for obtaining a subsistence, and so ample a field for the exertion of talents and industry. All my family join in compliments to Madame de Lafayette and yourself. Adieu.

TO COUNT DE ROCHAMBEAU.

Mount Vernon, 29 January, 1789.

MY DEAR COUNT,

By some unusual delay in the conveyance of your kind letter dated the 15th of June last, I have not had the satisfaction of receiving it before this time. As I am always happy in hearing of your prosperity, I would not defer expressing my obligations by the first occasion.

I had long judged by the different public accounts I had seen relative to the affairs of France, that you

were nearly in the moment of a crisis, when your constitution would assume, in some respects, a new form. By intelligence of a more recent date than your letter, I learn there has been a change in the administration, and that an assembly of the states was to be convoked on the 1st of January. The upright intentions, which I have always been taught to believe were possessed by the present King of France, and the unbounded affection, which the inhabitants of that country are accustomed to entertain for their monarch, persuade me that affairs will all go right, and that the temporary derangement will ultimately terminate in the permanent welfare of the kingdom. For, if the interests and resources of that kingdom should be judiciously managed, you can hardly fail of being the happiest and most powerful people in the world.

In the strange situation of political affairs in the north of Europe, and in the midst of the various changes of alliances, which have taken place among the most considerable nations in your quarter of the globe, one is left to wander in a labyrinth of uncertainties in regard to the result. The nations seem to be so entangled by different ties, that it will require all the skill of their statesmen to dissolve them, or all the force of their warriors to cut the Gordian knot. Calculating upon the known superiority of civil institutions and discipline over ignorance and brutal force, I am astonished to find, that the two imperial powers have made so little progress against the Turks in their first campaign. As to the general issue, though we should use all the fixed principles for making the calculation, much will doubtless depend upon contingency. For example, the fate * of the King of Eng-

* Touching this point he wrote as follows to Mr. Samuel Powell a few days later.

"Be the cause of the British King's insanity what it may, his situa-

land may make some important alterations in the European system. Notwithstanding it might probably, in a commercial view, be greatly for the advantage of America, that a war should rage on the other side of the Atlantic, yet I shall never so far divest myself of the feelings of a man interested in the happiness of his fellow-men, as to wish my country's prosperity might be built on the ruins of that of other nations. On the contrary, I cannot but hope, that the independence of America, to which you have so gloriously contributed, will prove a blessing to mankind. It is thus you see, my dear Count, in retirement upon my farm I speculate upon the fate of nations; amusing myself with innocent reveries, that mankind will one day grow happier and better.

I had the honor of writing to you some time ago by Mr. Gouverneur Morris. He will have told you every thing important concerning the affairs of this country until his departure; since which little worthy of notice has happened. Our prospects have been gradually meliorating. Unanimity increases. Economy has succeeded to profusion. Industry prevails. Such is the general picture of the United States. We are on the point of seeing the completion of the new government, which, by giving motives to labor and security to property, cannot fail to augment beyond all former example the capital stock, that is to say, the aggregate amount of property in the country. I speak with the more confidence, because so many of the elections of senators and representatives to Congress are already made, that there is the best reason to

tion, if alive, deserves commiseration. Better perhaps would it have been for his nation, though not for ours, under present prospects, if these events had happened at the time when you say Dr. Franklin supposes his Majesty's constitution was tinged with that malady." — *February 5th.*

believe the wisdom, the patriotism, and the virtue of America will be conspicuously concentred in that body.

I am, &c.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 31 January, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your two letters of December 20th and January 4th are before me.* I am much obliged to you for the intelligence contained in them, because it enabled me to contradict a report in circulation among the antifederalists, that your State had made choice of only one representative to Congress, that no more would probably be appointed, and that every thing was in very great confusion. Though facts will ultimately become known, yet much mischief to the federal cause may be done by suffering misrepresentation to pass unnoticed or unrefuted. Last winter the antifederalists in Philadelphia published, "that Connecticut had been surprised into an adoption of the constitution, while a great majority of the freemen were opposed to it." Now it is certain, nothing can fix the stigma of falsehood upon that assertion better than the late respectable appointments in that State. Much the same thing

---

* *From General Lincoln's Letter.* — "Last Thursday our votes were given in for representatives, and for electors of president and vice-president. Mr. Ames is probably chosen for this district. He was an active member in our convention, and has always distinguished himself as an honest, good man. I can hardly guess who will represent the other districts, except the western one, which I think will be represented by Mr. Sedgwick. The majority, however, I am confident will be good members. There were great exertions made for Mr. Samuel Adams. He would probably have carried the vote, could the people have been persuaded, that he was in heart a federalist. Our senators are federal indeed, Mr. Strong and Mr. Dalton." — *December 20th.*

has happened in Maryland. The federal ticket has been carried by a majority of thousands.

By the best information I can obtain, federal sentiments are spreading perhaps faster than ever in this commonwealth. It is generally supposed that six if not seven of the representatives from it to Congress will be decided for the constitution. Monday next will, however, confirm or contradict this opinion, it being the day of election throughout the State. I will only add, that, in Maryland and this State, it is probable Mr. John Adams will have a considerable number of the votes of the electors. Some of those gentlemen will have been advised, that this measure would be entirely agreeable to me, and that I considered it the only certain way to prevent the election of an antifederalist. With sentiments of the greatest esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Mount Vernon, 13 February, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

Having found that there is a vessel on the point of sailing from Alexandria for Havre de Grace, I would not forego so good an opportunity of addressing a letter to you, although nothing very material has occurred since the date of my last, which was transmitted by Mr. Gouverneur Morris. As you doubtless will have seen in the gazettes the measures taken by the different States for carrying the new government into execution, I will not therefore enter upon any report of news, or discussion of political topics.

Exclusive of these things, the greatest and most important objects of internal concern, which at present

occupy the attention of the public mind, are manufactures and inland navigation. Many successful efforts in fabrics of different kinds are every day made. Those composed of cotton, I think will be of the most immediate and extensive utility. Mr. Milne, an English gentleman, who has been many years introducing those manufactures into France, and whose father is now carrying them on, under the protection of government, at the royal château of Muette in Passy, has been at my house this week, and is of opinion that they may be prosecuted in America to greater advantage than in France or England. He has been almost two years in Georgia, stimulating and instructing the planters to the production of cotton. In that State and South Carolina it is said the cotton may be made of a most excellent quality, and in such abundant quantities as to prove a more profitable species of agriculture than any other crop. The increase of that new material, and the introduction of the late improved machines to abridge labor, must be of almost infinite consequence to the prosperity of the United States.

A desire of encouraging whatever is useful and economical seems now generally to prevail. Several capital artists in different branches have lately arrived in the country. A factory of glass is established upon a large scale on Monococy River near Fredericktown in Maryland. I am informed it will this year produce glass of various kinds nearly to the amount of ten thousand pounds' value. This factory will be essentially benefited by having the navigation of the Potomac completely opened. But the total benefits of that navigation will not be confined to narrower limits than the extent of the whole western territory of the United States.

You have been made acquainted, my dear Sir, with my ideas of the practicability, importance, and extent of that navigation, as they have been occasionally, though fully expressed, in my several letters to you. Notwithstanding my constant and utmost endeavours to obtain precise information respecting the nearest and best communication between the Ohio and Lake Erie, I am not yet able to add any thing more satisfactory to the observations, which I have had the honor to make on that subject; but I have lately received a correct draft, executed principally from actual surveys, of the country between the sources of the Potomac and those navigable waters that fall into the Ohio. Of this I enclose you such a rough sketch as my avocations would permit me to make; my principal object being to show, that the distance between the two waters is shorter, and that the means of communication are easier, than I had hitherto represented or imagined. I need not describe what and how extensive the rivers are, which will be thus in a wonderful manner connected, as soon as the Potomac shall be rendered entirely passable. The passage would have been opened from Fort Cumberland to the Great Falls (nine miles from tide-water) before this time, as I mentioned in my letter of the 31st of August last, had it not been for the unfavorableness of the season. In spite of that untoward circumstance, I have the pleasure to inform you, that two or three boats have actually arrived at the last-mentioned place.

I am going on Monday next to visit the works, as far as the Seneca Falls. Could I have delayed writing this letter until my return from thence, and afterwards availed myself of the same conveyance, I might have been more particular in my account of the state of

the several works, and especially of the situation of the land adjoining the canal at the Great Falls. Whensoever the produce of the parts of the country bordering on the sources of the Potomac, and contiguous to the long rivers that run into it (particularly the Shenandoah and South Branch), shall be water-borne, down to tide-water for exportation, I conceive this place must become very valuable. From the conveniency of the basin a little above the spot where the locks are to be placed, and from the inducements which will be superadded by several fine mill-seats, I cannot entertain a doubt of the establishment of a town in that place. Indeed mercantile people are desirous that the event should take place as soon as possible. Manufactures of various commodities, and in iron particularly, will doubtless be carried on to advantage there. The mill-seats I know have long been considered as very valuable ones. How far buildings erected upon them may be exposed to injuries from freshets or the breaking up of the ice, I am not competent to determine from my own knowledge; but the opinion of persons better acquainted with these matters than I am, is, that they may be rendered secure. On the commodiousness of Alexandria for carrying on the fur trade throughout the whole western country, I treated in a very minute, and I may say almost voluminous manner, in my communication to you on the 30th of May, 1787. Probably Georgetown, and the place which I have just mentioned, will participate largely and happily in the great emoluments to be derived from that and other valuable articles, through the inland navigation of the upper and western country. I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

TO JAMES MONROE.

Mount Vernon, 23 February, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

I received by the last mail your letter, dated the 15th of this month, accompanied with your printed observations on the new constitution, and am much obliged by this token of your polite attention. However I may differ from you in sentiment on some of the points, which are advocated in your treatise, I am pleased in discovering so much candor and liberality as seem to predominate in your style and manner of investigation. That a spirit of unanimity, accommodation, and rectitude may prevail so extensively, as to facilitate the means for removing any well-grounded apprehensions of the possible ill consequences, which may result from the general government, is the sincere wish of, dear Sir, your most obedient, &c.

TO HARRY INNES.

Mount Vernon, 2 March, 1789.

SIR,

I have been favored by the receipt of your obliging letter, dated the 18th of December last, just in time to send my acknowledgment by a person who is immediately returning to Kentucky.* This circumstance

* Affairs in the western country at this time wore an unfavorable aspect. The people of Kentucky were looking with a good deal of solicitude to the result of the pending negotiation respecting the navigation of the Mississippi; and it would seem, that their British neighbours at the north thought this a good opportunity to tempt them with secret propositions, and to try the strength of their fidelity to the Union. And the Spaniards at the south were equally ready to scatter the seeds of disaffection, and to encourage in the inhabitants of the west a separation from the federal government. Certain manœuvres touching these

prevents me from expressing so fully as I might otherwise have done, the sense I have of the very patriotic sentiments you entertain respecting the important matter, which is the subject of your letter. As a friend to United America, I embrace with extreme satisfaction the proposals you are pleased to offer of transmitting farther intelligence. For which purpose I will endeavour to arrange and send you a cipher by the earliest safe conveyance. In the mean time, I rely implicitly upon that honor which you have pledged, and those professions which you have made; and sincerely hope, that your activity and discretion will be successful in developing the machinations of all those, who, by sowing the seeds of disaffection, may attempt

---

matters had come to the knowledge of Mr. Innes, which caused his writing to General Washington on the subject.

"In the latter end of this summer," said he, "it was suggested to me, that the British court had emissaries in Kentucky. From the abhorrence and detestation, which I have to a British connexion, other than that of friends and allies, I was induced to keep a look-out, and scrutinize the conduct of all strangers. My observations soon convinced me of the truth of the case. Among others, Lieutenant-Colonel Connolly (late of Fort Pitt) from Detroit has visited this district. His conduct has alarmed my fears. He had some confidential conferences with influential characters. He touched the key to fomentations, and offered assistance to enable the inhabitants of the western country to seize on the city of New Orleans, and secure thereby the navigation of the Mississippi. How his machinations are to be counteracted is the great object. I would be more explicit if the conveyance of my letter were more certain. It is entrusted to chance; I must therefore act with caution.

"Relying implicitly on this fact, that whatever tends to disturb the peace of United America would distress and injure your tranquillity and repose, and that your aiding hand would not be withheld when your country's cause required it, I have ventured to solicit your advice and directions on this interesting subject, and would wish to write confidentially to you on this business, if by your answer I should conceive myself justified in the attempt. Should this proposed communication meet your approbation, will it not be advisable to invent a cipher for the preservation of that secrecy, which the magnitude of the subject requires. This being arranged, I pledge my honor to give you from time to time a faithful detail of facts." — *Danville, Kentucky, December* 18*th*, 1788.

to separate any portion of the United States from the Union. I will only add, that for myself I have little doubt but that a perseverance in temperate measures and good dispositions will produce such a system of national policy as shall be mutually advantageous to all parts of the American republic. I am, Sir, with much esteem, yours, &c.

TO BENJAMIN HARRISON.

Mount Vernon, 9 March, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

My friendship is not in the least lessened by the difference, which has taken place in our political sentiments, nor is my regard for you diminished by the part you have acted. Men's minds are as variant as their faces, and, where the motives of their actions are pure, the operation of the former is no more to be imputed to them as a crime, than the appearance of the latter; for both, being the work of nature, are alike unavoidable. Liberality and charity, instead of clamor and misrepresentation (which latter only serve to foment the passions without enlightening the understanding), ought to govern in all disputes about matters of importance. Whether the former have appeared in some of the leaders of the opposition, the impartial world will decide.

According to report, your individual endeavours to prevent inflammatory measures from being adopted, redound greatly to your credit. The reasons, my dear Sir, why I have not written to you for a long time are two; first, because I found it an insupportable task to answer the letters, which were written to me, and, at the same time, to pay that attention to my

private concerns which they required, and there being little besides politics worthy of notice; secondly, because I did not incline to appear as a partisan in the interesting subject, that has agitated the public mind since the date of my last letter to you. For it was my sincere wish, that the constitution, which had been submitted to the people, might, after a fair and dispassionate investigation, stand or fall according to its merits or demerits. Besides, I found by disagreeable experience, that almost all the sentiments extracted from me in answer to private letters, or communicated orally, by some means or other found their way into the public gazettes, as well as some other sentiments ascribed to me, which never had an existence in my imagination.

In touching upon the more delicate part of your letter, the communication of which fills me with real concern, I will deal by you with all that frankness, which is due to friendship, and which I wish should be a characteristic feature in my conduct through life. I will therefore declare to you, that, if it should be my inevitable fate to administer the government, (for Heaven knows, that no event can be less desired by me, and that no earthly consideration short of so general a call, together with a desire to reconcile contending parties as far as in me lies, could again bring me into public life,) I will go to the chair under no pre-engagement of any kind or nature whatsoever. But, when in it, I will, to the best of my judgment, discharge the duties of the office with that impartiality and zeal for the public good, which ought never to suffer connexions of blood or friendship to intermingle so as to have the least sway on decisions of a public nature. I may err, notwithstanding my most strenuous efforts to execute the difficult trust with fidelity and

unexceptionably; but my errors shall be of the head, not of the heart. For all recommendations for appointments, so far as they may depend upon or come from me, a due regard shall be had to the fitness of characters, the pretensions of different candidates, and, so far as is proper, to political considerations. These shall be invariably my governing motives.

You will perceive, then, my dear Sir, that I cannot with propriety say any thing more on the subject, than that several applications have been made to me for the office immediately in question without having received any answer. I wish you had pursued the policy, which the gentleman who now occupies it has done, of obtaining the appointment from the executive of this State. Although that gentleman was an officer, yet he is quite unknown to me, and therefore I cannot speak at all upon the ground of comparative claims of personal merits. I conceive, however, that it will be found no pleasant thing, possibly very much the reverse, to displace one man under these circumstances of actual occupancy, merely to make room for another, however considerable his abilities, or unimpeached his integrity may appear to the public eye.

I am, Sir, &c.

TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Mount Vernon, 11 March, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

I was favored last evening by yours of the 20th ultimo, and am glad to be confirmed in the idea, that a spirit of unanimity is becoming still more prevalent. My having company with me at present, and being much occupied with my private concerns, will be con-

sidered by you as sufficient reasons for my writing in a laconic manner. I will therefore reply to the principal scope of your letter with all that brevity, frankness, and friendship, which in such cases one friend has a right to expect from another.

Should it become inevitably necessary for me to go into the chair of government, I have determined to go free from all positive engagements of every nature whatsoever. This is the answer I have already given to a multiplicity of applications; and I have assigned, as the true reason of my conduct, the predominant desire I had of being at liberty to act with a sole reference to justice and the public good. But without deviating from that line of proceeding, which I had chalked out for myself, I may be permitted to say to you, my dear Sir, that you need not doubt my inclinations are very sincere and very strong to serve you, if I can do it consistently with my duty to the public. This I say, because I have known you in public life; for I do not intend to be swayed in the disposal of places, by motives arising from the ties of friendship or blood.

What offices there may be under the new government, or what pretensions may be urged in favor of the different candidates, I cannot pretend to foretell. All I will add at present is, that you may rest assured I am, with sentiments of real affection, your friend, &c.*

* These sentiments were reiterated with the same frankness and decision, and without any perceptible bias of inclination or feeling, to his most intimate friends, his relations, and to persons who were only known to him by name or from a slight acquaintance. A gentleman, who was a foreigner by birth, but for whom he had a very sincere esteem, applied to him in favor of a friend, who was not a native American, but who resided in the United States, and had become a citizen; and who was acknowledged to be entirely competent to the office solicited, both as

TO GEORGE S. WASHINGTON.

Mount Vernon, 23 March, 1789.

DEAR GEORGE,

As it is probable that I shall soon be under the necessity of quitting this place, and entering once more into the bustle of public life, in conformity to the voice of my country, and the earnest entreaty of

---

to character and abilities. In answering the letter, which contained the application, after stating the dread with which he looked forward to the unavoidable necessity of his again entering into public life, he went on to say;

"From the moment when the necessity had become more apparent, and as it were inevitable, I anticipated, with a heart filled with distress, the ten thousand embarrassments, perplexities, and troubles, to which I must again be exposed in the evening of a life already nearly consumed in public cares. Among all these anxieties, I will not conceal from you, I anticipated none greater, than those that were likely to be produced by applications for appointments to the different offices, which would be created under the new government. Nor will I conceal, that my apprehensions have already been but too well justified. Scarcely a day passes, in which applications of one kind or another do not arrive; insomuch that, had I not early adopted some general principles, I should before this time have been wholly occupied in this business. As it is, I have found the number of answers, which I have been necessitated to give in my own hand, an almost insupportable burden to me.

"The points in which all these answers have agreed in substance are, that, should it be my lot to go again into public office, I would go without being under any possible engagements of any nature whatsoever; that, so far as I knew my own heart, I would not be in the remotest degree influenced, in making nominations, by motives arising from the ties of family or blood; and that, on the other hand, three things, in my opinion, ought principally to be regarded, namely, the fitness of characters to fill offices, the comparative claims from the former merits and sufferings in service of the different candidates, and the distribution of appointments in as equal a proportion as might be to persons belonging to the different States in the Union. Without precautions of this kind, I clearly foresaw the endless jealousies, and possibly the fatal consequences, to which a government, depending altogether on the good will of the people for its establishment, would certainly be exposed in its early stages. Besides, I thought, whatever the effect might be in pleasing or displeasing any individuals at the present moment, a due concern for my own reputation, not less decisively than a sacred regard to the interests of the community, required, that I should hold myself abso-

my friends, however contrary it is to my own desires or inclinations, I think it a duty incumbent on me, as your uncle and friend, to give you some advisory hints, which, if properly attended to, will I conceive be found very useful to you in regulating your conduct, and giving you respectability, not only at present, but through every period of life.

---

lutely at liberty to act, while in office, with a sole reference to justice and the public good.

"The limits of a letter would not suffice to describe the difficulties, which I fear might occur in conferring important offices upon persons, however meritorious they may really be, who have resided but a little time, and are consequently but little known, in America. A single disgust excited in a particular State, on this account, might perhaps raise a flame of opposition, that could not easily, if ever, be extinguished. For the fact, I apprehend, will be found to be, that there will be at least a hundred competitors for every office of any kind of importance. Indeed, the number of offices will, in our economical management of the affairs of the republic, be much fewer, as I conceive, and the pretensions of those who may wish to occupy them much more forcible, than many well informed men have imagined. At all events, so much I can with truth declare, that several of the candidates, who have already come forward, have claims to the public attention and gratitude, which cannot be set aside without a palpable act of injustice. Some of them are men of unquestionable talents, who have wasted the flower of their lives in the civil or military service of their country; men, who have materially injured their properties, and excluded themselves from obtaining a subsistence for their families by the professions they were accustomed to pursue. There are some, I may add, who have shed their blood, and deserved all that a grateful country has to bestow. Nor are they, in my judgment, incapable of reflecting lustre on the most dignified stations.

"I have no conception of a more delicate task, than that which is imposed by the constitution on the executive. It is the nature of republicans, who are nearly in a state of equality, to be extremely jealous as to the disposal of all honorary or lucrative appointments. Perfectly convinced I am, that, if injudicious or unpopular measures should be taken by the executive under the new government, with regard to appointments, the government itself would be in the utmost danger of being utterly subverted by those measures. So necessary is it at this crisis to conciliate the good will of the people, and so impossible is it, in my judgment, to build the edifice of public happiness but upon their affections. Your good sense and native candor must serve me as an apology for being thus explicit." — *March 21st.*

You have now arrived at that age when you must quit the trifling amusements of a boy, and assume the more dignified manners of a man. At this crisis your conduct will attract the notice of those who are about you; and, as the first impressions are generally the most lasting, your doings now may mark the leading traits of your character through life. It is therefore absolutely necessary, if you mean to make any figure upon the stage, that you should take the first steps right. What those steps are, and what general line is to be pursued to lay the foundation of an honorable and happy progress, it is the part of age and experience to point out. This I shall do as far as is in my power, with the utmost cheerfulness; and I trust that your own good sense will show you the necessity of following it.

The first and great object with you at present is, to acquire, by industry and application, such knowledge as your situation enables you to obtain, and as will be useful to you in life. In doing this, two other important advantages will be gained besides the acquisition of knowledge, namely, a habit of industry, and a disrelish for that profusion of money, and dissipation of time, which are ever attendant upon idleness. I do not mean by a close application to your studies, that you should never enter into those amusements, which are suited to your age and station; they can be made to go hand in hand with each other, and, used in their proper seasons, will ever be found to be a mutual assistance to one another. But what amusements, and when they are to be taken, is the great matter to be attended to. Your own judgment, with the advice of your *real* friends, who may have an opportunity of a personal intercourse with you, can point out the particular manner in which you may best spend your

moments of relaxation, better than I can at a distance. One thing, however, I would strongly impress upon you, namely, that, when you have leisure to go into company, it should always be of the best kind that the place you are in will afford; by this means you will be constantly improving your manners and cultivating your mind, while you are relaxing from your books; and good company will ever be found much less expensive than bad. You cannot offer, as an excuse for not using it, that you cannot gain admission there, or that you have not a proper attention paid to you in it. This is an apology made only by those, whose manners are disgusting, or whose character is exceptionable; neither of which I hope will ever be said of you.

I cannot enjoin too strongly upon you a due observance of economy and frugality, as you well know yourself the present state of your property and finances will not admit of any unnecessary expense. The article of clothing is now one of the chief expenses that you will incur, and in this I fear you are not so economical as you should be. Decency and cleanliness will always be the first objects in the dress of a judicious and sensible man. A conformity to the prevailing fashion in a certain degree is necessary; but it does not from thence follow, that a man should always get a new coat or other clothes upon every trifling change in the mode, when perhaps he has two or three very good ones by him. A person who is anxious to be a leader of the fashion, or one of the first to follow it, will certainly appear in the eyes of judicious men, to have nothing better than a frequent change of dress to recommend him to notice. I would always wish you to appear sufficiently decent to entitle you to admission into any company where

you may be; but your own knowledge must convince you, that you should be as little expensive in this respect as you properly can. You should always keep some clothes to wear to church or on particular occasions, which should not be worn every day; this can be done without any additional expense, for whenever it is necessary to get new clothes, those which have been kept for particular occasions will then come in as every-day ones, unless they should be of superior quality to the new.

What I have said with respect to clothes will apply, perhaps, more pointedly to Lawrence than to you; and, as you are much older than he is, and more capable of judging of the propriety of what I have here observed, you must pay attention to him in this respect, and see that he does not wear his clothes improperly or extravagantly.

Much more might be said to you, as a young man, upon the necessity of paying a due attention to the moral virtues; but this may, perhaps, more properly be the subject of a future letter when you may be about to enter into the world. If you comply with the advice herein given, to pay a diligent attention to your studies, and employ your time of relaxation in proper company, you will find but few opportunities and little inclination, while you continue at an academy, to enter into those scenes of vice or dissipation, which too often present themselves to youth in any place, and particularly in towns. If you are determined to neglect your books, and plunge into extravagance and dissipation, nothing I could say now would prevent it; for you must be employed, and if it is not in pursuit of those things which are profitable, it must be in pursuit of those which are destructive.

As your time of continuing with Mr. Hanson will

expire the last of this month, and I understand Dr. Craik has expressed an inclination to take you and Lawrence to board with him, I shall know his determination respecting the matter; and, if it is agreeable to him and Mrs. Craik to take you, I shall be pleased with it, for I am certain that nothing will be wanting on their part to make your situation agreeable and useful to you. Should you live with the Doctor, I shall request him to take you both under his peculiar care, provide such clothes for you, from time to time, as he shall judge necessary, and do by you in the same manner as he would if you were his own children. Which if he will undertake, I am sensible, from the knowledge which I have of him, and the very amiable character and disposition of Mrs. Craik, that they will spare no proper exertions to make your situation pleasing and profitable.

Should you or Lawrence, therefore, behave in such a manner as to occasion any complaints to be made to me, you may depend upon losing that place which you now have in my affections, and any future hopes you may have from me. But if, on the contrary, your conduct is such as to merit my regard, you may always depend upon the warmest attachment and sincere affection of your friend and uncle.

TO GEORGE CLINTON, GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK.

Mount Vernon, 25 March, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

With very great sensibility I have received the honor of your letter dated the 10th instant, and consider the kind and obliging invitation to your house, until suitable accommodations can be provided for the

President, as a testimony of your friendship and politeness, of which I shall ever retain a grateful sense. But if it should be my lot (for Heaven knows it is not my wish) to appear again in a public station, I shall make it a point to take hired lodgings or rooms in a tavern until some house can be provided. Because it would be wrong, in my real judgment, to impose such a burden on any private family, as must unavoidably be occasioned by my company; and because I think it would be generally expected, that, being supported by the public at large, I should not be burdensome to individuals. With respect to the other part of your letter, which is expressive of a wish to be apprized of the time of my approach to the city, I can assure you, with the utmost sincerity, that no reception can be so congenial to my feelings as a quiet entry devoid of ceremony, be the manner of it what it may.

I have the honor to be, &c.*

TO THOMAS MARSHALL.

Mount Vernon, 27 March, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

I have duly received your letter dated the 12th of February. If I was greatly alarmed at the nature of the transactions mentioned in it, I was not less obliged to you for communicating so clear an account of them.†

* An invitation similar to that of Governor Clinton was likewise received from Mr. Jay.

† Relating to the same subject as that mentioned in Mr. Innes's letter. (See above, p. 474.) Mr. Marshall had given a long account of a memoir written by General Wilkinson, and presented by him to the Spanish Governor of New Orleans; and also of the doings of Dr. Connolly in Kentucky, who was suspected of being an emissary in the British interests from Canada. — BUTLER'S *History of Kentucky*, p. 170 *et seq.*

It is true, I had previously received some verbal and written informations on the subject, of a similar tenor, but none which placed the affair in such an alarming point of view, as that in which I now behold it. Not knowing of any certain conveyance for this letter, which might justify me in being more explicit, I shall delay writing more fully until some safer method of bringing my sentiments to you can be obtained. In the mean time, as I know you are sufficiently devoted to the interests of your country, and warmly attached to the prosperity of the Union at large, I shall hope you will persist in taking the most discreet and effectual measures for obtaining as accurate a knowledge as possible of the transactions in your quarter; a report of which I shall earnestly request to be favored with, whenever you shall have the power of transmitting it through a confidential channel, or, if it shall be found necessary, whenever a cipher shall be established between us. For, without some such precautions, a miscarriage of letters on such delicate subjects might be attended with very disadvantageous consequences. With the greatest esteem and regard, I am, &c.

TO JAMES MADISON, IN CONGRESS.

Mount Vernon, 30 March, 1789.

My dear Sir,

I have been favored with your letter of the 19th, by which it appears that a quorum of Congress was hardly to be expected before the beginning of the next week. As this delay must be very irksome to the attending members, and every day's continuance of it, before the government is in operation, will be more sensibly felt, I am resolved, that none shall proceed from me

that can well be avoided, after notice of the election is announced, and therefore I take the liberty of requesting the favor of you to engage lodgings for me previous to my arrival.*

Mr. Lear, who has lived with me three years as a private secretary, will accompany or precede me in the stage; and Colonel Humphreys I presume will be of my party. On the subject of lodgings, I will frankly declare to you, that I mean to go into none but hired ones. If these cannot be had tolerably convenient (for I shall not be nice about them), I would take rooms in the most decent tavern, till a house can be provided for the more permanent reception of the President. I have already declined a very polite and pressing invitation from the Governor to lodge at his house, till a place could be prepared for me; after which, should any other offer of a similar nature be made, there could be no propriety in my acceptance of it. As you are fully acquainted with my sentiments on this head, I shall only add, that, as I mean to avoid private families on the one hand, so on the other I am not anxious to be placed early in a situation for entertaining; for which reason private lodgings, till I can feel the way a little, would not only be more agreeable to my own wishes, but possibly more consistent with sound policy.

* The day appointed for the assembling of Congress was the 4th of March; but, so tardily did the members come together, that a quorum of both Houses was not formed till the 6th of April. Speaking on this subject, General Washington said in a letter to General Knox; "The stupor or listlessness, with which our public measures seem to be pervaded, is to me a matter of deep regret. Indeed it has so strange an appearance, that I cannot but wonder how men, who are anxious to get into office or who are ever prevailed upon to accept it, can reconcile such conduct with their sense of propriety. The delay is inauspicious, to say the least of it, and the world must condemn it." — *April 10th.*

As it is my intention to conform to the public desire and expectation with respect to the style proper for the President to live in, it may be well to know what these are before he enters upon it. After all, something may perhaps have been decided upon before this will reach you, that may make the request nugatory. If otherwise, I will only in one word say, that my wish is to be placed in an independent situation for the purpose I have mentioned. I have the honor to be, with sentiments of the highest regard, &c.

TO HENRY KNOX.

Mount Vernon, 1 April, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

The mail of the 30th brought me your favor of the 23d, by which, and the regular information you have had the goodness to transmit to me of the state of things in New York, I am very much obliged, and thank you accordingly.

I feel for those members of the new Congress, who hitherto have given an unavailing attendance at the theatre of action. For myself, the delay may be compared to a reprieve; for in confidence I tell you, (with the *world* it would obtain little credit,) that my movements to the chair of government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit, who is going to the place of his execution; so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political skill, abilities, and inclination, which are necessary to manage the helm. I am sensible that I am embarking the voice of the

people, and a good name of my own, on this voyage; but what returns will be made for them, Heaven alone can foretell. Integrity and firmness are all I can promise. These, be the voyage long or short, shall never forsake me, although I may be deserted by all men; for of the consolations, which are to be derived from these, under any circumstances, the world cannot deprive me. I am, &c.

TO WILLIAM HARTSHORNE.

Mount Vernon, 1 April, 1789.

SIR,

As it seems, that it will be my unavoidable lot to be again brought into public life, however contrary to my inclinations, I must prepare myself to meet with many occurrences, which will be painful and embarrassing; but I can truly say, that few events would distress me more, than the realizing of the apprehensions of so respectable a body of my fellow citizens, as the Quakers of Philadelphia, as mentioned in your letter of the 26th ultimo.*

If I must go on to New York, and my wishes and inclinations were consulted on the occasion, they would lead me to proceed in as quiet and peaceable a manner

* It seems that the citizens of Philadelphia, among other demonstrations of respect and joy, were preparing to celebrate the entrance of General Washington into that city by an illumination, when he should proceed to New York to be invested with the office of President. On some former occasion of a similar kind, as Mr. Hartshorne said, "numerous people had suffered much in their property, and their persons were insulted, and they were in danger of their lives from the outrages of a mob." To prevent the repetition of such disturbances and disasters, he intimated a wish, that General Washington would interfere in the matter; but whether to suspend the illumination, or to have it regulated on a better footing than formerly, is not suggested by the writer.

as possible. But, situated as I am at present, and knowing nothing of the intentions of the people respecting my passing through the several towns, more than what the public papers inform me of, I do not see how I can with any degree of propriety or delicacy interfere at this moment to prevent the ill effects, which are feared from an illumination of the city of Philadelphia. Could any way be pointed out to me, by which I might ward off the evil dreaded by the Quakers, I would, with peculiar pleasure, take every proper step to prevent it; for, although I have no agency in these matters, yet nothing would be more painful to me than to be the innocent cause of distress or injury to any individual of my country.

I must beg you to accept of my best thanks for your kind wishes for my happiness, and believe me to be, with very great esteem and regard,

Dear Sir, &c.

TO HECTOR ST. JOHN.

Mount Vernon, 10 April, 1789.

Sir,

I had the honor to receive, by the last post, your very polite letter, and must beg you to accept my warmest acknowledgments for the felicitations and good wishes, which were contained in it.

A combination of circumstances and events seems to have rendered my embarking again on the ocean of public affairs inevitable. How opposite this is to my own desires and inclinations, I need not say. Those who know me are, I trust, convinced of it. For the rectitude of my intentions I appeal to the great Searcher of hearts; and if I have any knowl-

edge of myself I can declare, that no prospects however flattering, no personal advantage however great, no desire of fame however easily it might be acquired, could induce me to quit the private walks of life at my age and in my situation; but if, by any exertion or services of mine, my country can be benefited, I shall feel more amply compensated for the sacrifices which I make, than I possibly can be by any other means.

I am very happy to find by the translations, which you were so polite as to send me, that there is so essential a change in the political opinions of the French nation. Indeed the American revolution, or the peculiar light of the age, seems to have opened the eyes of almost every nation in Europe, and a spirit of equal liberty appears fast to be gaining ground everywhere, which must afford satisfaction to every friend of mankind. I am, &c.

TO JOHN LANGDON.*

Mount Vernon, 14 April, 1789.

SIR,

I had the honor to receive your official communication, by the hand of Mr. Secretary Thomson, about one o'clock this day. Having concluded to obey the important and flattering call of my country, and having been impressed with an idea of the expediency of my being with Congress at as early a period as

* Mr. Langdon was a senator from New Hampshire, and when the senate was first organized, on the 6th of April, he was chosen president of that body *pro tempore*. In this capacity he had officially notified to General Washington his having been unanimously elected President of the United States.

possible, I propose to commence my journey on Thursday morning, which will be the day after to-morrow. I have the honor to be, with sentiments of esteem, Sir, &c.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

No. I. p. 43.

FIRST GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI.

An alarm and dissatisfaction had been excited in the public mind by the institution of this society, which had not been anticipated by its founders, and which had given much uneasiness to several of the officers, and particularly to General Washington. He had carefully watched the progress of public opinion on the subject, and weighed all the objections which had been advanced against the society. It was evident, that many persons made a handle of it to rouse the suspicions of the people and effect political objects; yet he likewise saw, that men of intelligence and true patriotism were among those, who spoke loudly against it, and expressed fears of its unfavorable tendency. Some of these were persons, whose judgment he felt bound to respect, and in the purity of whose motives he had entire confidence.

In this view of the matter he had made up his mind, before the first general meeting of the society, that it was absolutely necessary to effect some radical alterations in its constitution. Indeed it was his conviction, that it would be better to abolish the society altogether, than that it should be a source of discord in the country, or be turned to purposes of party cabal and political dissension. He expressed his views in writing to several of his friends, and asked their sentiments. The following extracts from two letters written to him by General Greene will show, that a difference of opinion prevailed among the officers, and that General Greene himself was not in favor of a change, which he believed to be demanded only by an unreasonable popular caprice, excited more by sinister designs than any regard for the public good.

"*Newport, April 22d*, 1784. — The uproar that is raised against

the Cincinnati, makes me more anxious to be at the meeting than I ever expected to feel. It was uninteresting to me before. Assuming honors hurts my delicacy, but persecution banishes the influence. The subject is important, and it may be equally dangerous to recede or push forward; but I am decided in my opinion not to abolish the order from the prevailing clamors against it. If this is done away, the whole tide of abuse will run against the commutation. The public in New England seem to want something to quarrel with the officers about. Remove one thing, and they will soon find another. It is in the temper of the people, not in the matters complained of. I hope the meeting will not be hasty in their determination, or in too great a hurry to separate. It is yet uncertain what the politics of America will lead to, if they are not influenced by some collateral cause. It is necessary to create a jealousy in the people to bind them together. If they are not afraid of the Cincinnati, local policy will influence every measure. If Congress is silent on the subject, as I hope they will be, it will be a convincing proof they both see and feel its advantages. I am confident the tranquillity of the public can only be preserved by the continuance of the order. If I can come, I will; but, whether I do or not, I am for continuing the institution without alteration. To make any alteration in the present hour will be premature, injure its influence, and defeat all the good that may be expected from continuing it an object of public attention."

"*Newport, May 6th*, 1784. — The clamor against the order rather increases in Massachusetts and Connecticut States. In Rhode Island little is said about it, but in one county. Many sensible people are anxious for the continuance of the order. Many more wish the hereditary part lopped off, as the most exceptionable of the whole institution. Others again are offended at the hereditary part on account of the French officers. It is thought it may lead to an improper influence in our national affairs. But whatever objections are raised against the order, they are evidently paving the way for the commutation. People begin to say they should have no objection to paying the commutation, but for the dangerous combination of the Cincinnati. Drop the Cincinnati, and the old question will revive; but continue the order, and I am confident the commutation will go down. It is the wish of many, that the order should be altered, and admit no honorary members, and terminate with the present generation. But I fear any alteration, in the present state of things, would go far to de-

feat its influence upon the federal connexion, and the business of the commutation. It is worthy of some consideration to attempt giving reasonable satisfaction to the apprehensions of the people; but I am at a loss to determine what will effect it."

Notwithstanding these opinions of a friend, whom he valued most highly for his talents, the soundness of his judgment, and the elevation and rectitude of his character, General Washington's views respecting the expediency of radical changes in the constitution of the society were not altered. His ideas were presented to the members at their first general meeting in Philadelphia. The following memoranda are copied from a paper in his own handwriting.

MEMORANDA.

"Strike out every word, sentence, and clause, which has a political tendency.

"Discontinue the hereditary part in all its connexions, *absolutely*, without any substitution, which can be construed into concealment, or a change of ground *only*; for this would, in my opinion, increase, rather than allay suspicions.

"Admit no more honorary members into the society.

"Reject subscriptions or donations from every person, who is not a citizen of the United States.

"Place the funds upon such a footing, as to remove the jealousies, which are entertained on that score.

"Respecting the funds, it would be magnanimous to place them, in the first instance, in the hands of the legislatures for the *express purposes* for which they were intended. This would show a generous confidence in our country, which might be productive of favorable sentiments and returns.

"If it should be thought, that this would be going too far, reserve them till our numbers are reduced to a certain ratio of what they now are; or for a certain number of years; then to be disposed of as above.

"The disposal of them by will, or deed, is too unimportant an object, in my opinion, for any member to be tenacious of it. The sums subscribed were, in that moment, consigned to charitable purposes. No one ever expected to receive a farthing of it back, unless unhappily he should become an object of its charity; and in this case, whether he receives the benefit mediately or immediately from the society, the effect to him and obligation to them are precisely the same.

"Authorize the foreign officers to hold meetings in France, if it shall be permitted by their government. Empower them at those meetings to hear and decide upon the pretensions of those of their own body, who, under the letter or spirit of the institution, claim the privilege of becoming members of the Cincinnati; as also the pretensions of foreigners not of any particular State line, whose claims are founded on being officers in the American army. Americans, in foreign countries, who belonged to the line of any State, are to make application to the society of that State, who shall hear and decide thereupon.

"Upon these principles let the institution be formed in as clear, distinct, and explicit terms as language can convey. Let your secretary transmit the same to the senior foreign member in France, or the senior land and naval officer in that kingdom, if it shall be adjudged better for their government. Send copies also to the president of each State society. Accompany all of these with a well-composed letter, expressive of the reasons, which induced us to alter the constitution.

"Then abolish the general meetings altogether as unnecessary. The constitution being given, a continuation of them would be expensive, and very probably, from a diversity of sentiment and tenacity of opinion, might be productive of more dissension than harmony; for it has been much observed, 'that nothing loosens the bands of private friendship more, than for friends to put themselves against each other in public debate where every one is free to speak and to act.' District meetings might also be discontinued, as of very little use, but attractive of much speculation.

"No alterations, short of what are here enumerated, will, in my opinion, reconcile the society to the community. Whether these will do it is questionable. Without being possessed of the reasons, which induce many gentlemen to retain their *order* or badge of the society, it will be conceived by the public, that the order (which except in its perpetuity still appears in the same terrific array as at first) is a feather we cannot consent to pluck from *ourselves*, though we have taken it from our descendants. If we assign the reasons, we might, I presume, as well discontinue the order."

These amendments were nearly all approved, which will appear by the constitution of the society, as altered and adopted by the general meeting.

CONSTITUTION OF THE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI.

"SECTION I. The persons, who constitute this society, are all the commissioned and brevet officers of the army and navy of the United States, who have served three years, and who left the service with reputation; all officers who were in actual service at the conclusion of the war; all the principal staff officers of the Continental army; and the officers who have been deranged by the several resolutions of Congress, upon the different reforms of the army.

"II. There are also admitted into this society the late and present ministers of his Most Christian Majesty to the United States; all the generals and colonels of regiments, and officers of the navy ranking as colonels, who have coöperated with the armies of the United States in their exertions for liberty, and such other persons as have been admitted by the respective State meetings.

"III. The society shall have a president, vice-president, secretary, and assistant secretary.

"IV. There shall be a meeting of the society at least once in three years, on the first Monday in May, at such place as the president shall appoint. The said meeting shall consist of the aforesaid officers (whose expenses shall be equally borne by the State funds), and a representation from each State. The business of this general meeting shall be, to regulate the distribution of surplus funds, to appoint officers for the ensuing term, and to conform the by-laws of State meetings to the general objects of the institution.

"V. The society shall be divided into State meetings. Each meeting shall have a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer respectively; to be chosen by a majority of votes annually.

"VI. The State meetings shall be on the anniversary of Independence. They shall concert such measures as may conduce to the benevolent purposes of the society; and the several State meetings shall at suitable periods make application to their respective legislatures for grants of charters.

"VII. Any member removing from one State to another is to be considered in all respects as belonging to the meeting of the State in which he shall actually reside.

"VIII. The State meetings shall judge of the qualifications of its members, admonish, and, if necessary, expel any one, who may conduct himself unworthily.

"IX. The secretary of each State meeting shall register the

names of the members resident in each State, and transmit a copy thereof to the secretary of the society.

"X. In order to form funds for the relief of unfortunate members, their widows, and orphans, each officer shall deliver to the treasurer of the State meeting one month's pay.

"XI. No donations shall be received but from citizens of the United States.

"XII. The funds of each State meeting shall be loaned to the State, by permission of the legislature, and the interest only, annually be applied for the purposes of the society; and if, in process of time, difficulties should occur in executing the intentions of the society, the legislatures of the several States shall be requested to make such equitable dispositions as may be most correspondent with the original design of the institution.

"XIII. The subjects of his Most Christian Majesty, members of this society, may hold meetings at their pleasure, and form regulations for their police, conformably to the objects of the institution, and to the spirit of their government.

"XIV. The society shall have an *Order*; which shall be a *Bald Eagle* of gold, bearing on its breast the emblems hereafter described, suspended by a deep-blue ribbon edged with white, descriptive of the union of America and France.

"The principal figure, Cincinnatus; three senators presenting him with a sword and other military ensigns; on a field in the back ground, his wife standing at the door of their cottage; near it a plough, and other instruments of husbandry. Round the whole; OMNIA RELINQUIT SERVARE REMPUBLICAM.

"On the reverse, sun rising; a city with open gates, and vessels entering the port; Fame crowning Cincinnatus with a wreath inscribed VIRTUTIS PRÆMIUM. Below; hands joining, supporting a heart, with the motto ESTO PERPETUA. Round the whole; SOCIETAS CINCINNATORUM INSTITUTA A. D. MDCCLXXXIII.

"XV. A silver medal, representing the emblems, to be given to each member of the society, together with a diploma on parchment, whereon shall be impressed the figures of the order and medal, as above mentioned."

After this plan was promulgated, the main objections to the society were considered as removed, and the clamors of its foes gradually subsided. All parties seemed satisfied. Even General Greene, whose private affairs did not permit him to attend the meeting, wrote to General Washington, that he acquiesced heartily in the proceedings, and was pleased with the alterations that had been made.

No. II. p. 124.

RESPECTING THE PROPOSITIONS FOR INVESTING CONGRESS WITH ADDITIONAL POWERS FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES.

The defective powers granted to Congress by the articles of confederation, in regard to the execution of treaties and the regulation of commerce, were soon found to interpose formidable obstacles to any efficient legislation on these important subjects. The wisest statesmen foresaw, that this evil alone would be fatal to the prosperity of the country, if not to the union of the States, and they applied themselves seriously to devise a remedy. The following papers will exhibit the question as it was viewed by different parties.

FROM JAMES MCHENRY TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

"New York, 14 August, 1785.*

"DEAR SIR,

"Congress have had it under consideration to recommend to the several States to vest them with the power of regulating the trade of the States, as well with each other as with foreign nations; this power to constitute a part of the confederation, and to be exercised by nine States in Congress assembled; its object to enable Congress to lay as heavy duties and restrictions upon the trade of foreign nations, as foreign nations lay upon the trade of the United States. I apprehend that both the genius and instinct of the southern States will be found to be opposed to granting this power. I believe the eastern States, New York, and Pennsylvania are exceedingly anxious for it; but I do not wonder at their anxiety to obtain a monopoly of the carrying trade of the Union. What would be the consequence to the southern States in particular, were foreign vessels to be prevented from exporting their products? They would, for example, having only American vessels to carry off their commodities of export, have fewer purchasers for them; hence their prices would be unavoidably lowered. They would also have fewer foreign goods imported, which would oblige the consumers to pay dearer for what they must buy. It would seem, therefore, to be good policy in the southern States to encourage the number of buyers for what they have to sell, and the number of importers of

* When this letter was written, Mr. McHenry was attending Congress as a member from Maryland.

those articles they must buy, till they become as well peopled as the eastern States, when a naval defence will be easily established, or come of itself without the aid of restrictions.

"In the mean while, however, it may be said, that we ought to lay the foundation for a marine, and therefore ought to begin by discouraging foreign shipping and encouraging our own; for the riches, arising from buying what we want cheap and selling what we raise dear, will avail us nothing without a navy to protect them. But is it true, that a navy is at present necessary; and, if necessary, is it true, that our people would go to the expense of supporting it? Would it be right to add to our present burthens? Can we pay our present debts? Are we in a situation to enter into a war of imposts and prohibitions to force Great Britain or France to open to our shipping their West India possessions? Have we shipping enough to carry our exports and imports? When Great Britain passed the Navigation Act, she had in her harbours more than a sufficient number of vessels for her own trade. Great Britain too was well peopled at that period, and the capital of her traders equal to the exportation and purchase of her products. But our situation is different in both respects; and yet it is said we ought to force a navy, that we ought to prohibit British ships from exporting our products.

"Perhaps the point of true policy lies between forcing the growth of our shipping, and doing nothing that may forward their increase. Perhaps the southern States should give up something, and the other States should not ask every thing. Were Congress, under the latter idea, to frame a navigation act, the operation of which would gradually and slowly tend to augment the seamen and shipping of the States without sensibly wounding in its progress the interests of any State, and recommend the same to their adoption, is it not highly probable in such a case, that the good sense of the States would readily induce them to come into the measure? Upon this plan they would see what they were to give; that it could not hurt them, and that it might work a general benefit. They could repeal it too, if it was found to hurt them, which alone would be a great inducement with some States to pass it.

"You will excuse me for being thus particular. The subject is among the most interesting, and that has led me to it, well knowing, that, although you have withdrawn yourself from all public employment, yet there is nothing so near your heart as the public welfare. I am, &c.

"JAMES MCHENRY."

As a further illustration of this subject the following paper is curious and interesting. It is a report of a committee of Congress, made in May, 1785, embracing the topic alluded to in Mr. McHenry's letter. Although no consequences seem to have followed from it, yet the points upon which it touches are important, and they are presented in a condensed and perspicuous form.

"*The Committee, to whom was referred the Motion of Mr. Monroe, submit the following*

"REPORT.

"That the first paragraph of the ninth of the articles of confederation be altered so as to read thus, viz.

"'The United States in Congress assembled, shall have the sole and exclusive right and power of determining on peace and war, except in the cases mentioned in the sixth article; of sending and receiving ambassadors, entering into treaties and alliances; of regulating the trade of the States, as well with foreign nations, as with each other, and of laying such imposts and duties upon imports and exports, as may be necessary for the purpose; (provided, that the citizens of the States shall in no instance be subjected to pay higher imposts and duties, than those imposed on the subjects of foreign powers; provided also, that the legislative power of the several States shall not be restrained from prohibiting the importation or exportation of any species of goods or commodities whatsoever; provided also, that all such duties as may be imposed, shall be collected under the authority and accrue to the use of the State, in which the same shall be payable; and provided lastly, that every act of Congress for the above purpose, shall have the assent of nine States in Congress assembled;) of establishing rules for deciding in all cases, what captures on land or water shall be legal, and in what manner prizes taken by land or naval forces in the service of the United States shall be divided or appropriated; of granting letters of marque and reprisal in time of peace, appointing courts for the trial of piracies and felonies committed on the high seas, and establishing courts for receiving and determining finally appeals in all cases of captures; provided that no member of Congress shall be appointed judge of any of the said courts.'

"That the following letter be addressed to the legislatures of the several States, showing the principles on which the above alteration is proposed.

"'The United States having formed treaties of commerce with

the Most Christian King, the King of Sweden, and the States-General of the United Netherlands, and having appointed ministers with full authority to enter into treaties with other powers, upon such principles of reciprocity, as may promote their peace, harmony, and respective interests, it becomes necessary that such internal arrangements should be made, as may strictly comply with the faith of those treaties, and ensure success to their future negotiations. But in the pursuit of the means necessary for the attainment of those ends, considerable difficulties arise. If the legislature of each State adopts its own measures, many and very eminent disadvantages must, in their opinion, necessarily result therefrom. They apprehend it will be difficult for thirteen different legislatures, acting separately and distinctly, to agree in the same interpretation of a treaty, to take the same measures for carrying it into effect, and to conduct their several operations upon such principles as to satisfy those powers, and at the same time preserve the harmony and interests of the Union; or to concur in those measures, which may be necessary to counteract the policy of those powers, with whom they shall not be able to form commercial treaties, and who avoid it merely from an opinion of their imbecility and indecision. And if the several States levy different duties upon their particular produce, exported to the ports of those powers, or upon the produce and manufactures of those powers imported into each State, either in vessels navigated by and belonging to the citizens of these States, or the subjects of those powers, it will, they apprehend, induce on their part similar discriminations in the duties upon the commercial intercourse with each State, and thereby defeat the object of those treaties, and promote the designs of those, who wish to profit by their embarrassment. Unless the United States in Congress assembled are authorized to make those arrangements, which become necessary under their treaties, and are enabled to carry them into effect, they cannot complain of a violation of them on the part of other powers. And unless they act in concert, in the system of policy, which may be necessary to frustrate the designs of those powers, who lay injurious restraints on their trade, they must necessarily become the victims of their own indiscretion.

"'The common principle, upon which a friendly commercial intercourse is conducted between independent nations, is that of reciprocal advantage; and, if this is not obtained, it becomes the duty of the losing party to make such farther regulations, consistently with the faith of treaties, as will remedy the evil, and secure its

interests. If then the commercial regulations of any foreign power contravene the interests of any particular State, if they refuse admittance to its produce into its ports, upon the same terms that the State admits its manufactures here, what course will it take to remedy the evil? If it makes similar regulations to counteract those of that power, by reciprocating the disadvantages which it feels, by impost or otherwise, will it produce the desired effect? What operation will it have upon the neighbouring States? Will they enter into similar regulations, and make it a common cause? On the contrary, will they not in pursuit of the same local policy, avail themselves of this circumstance to turn it to their particular advantage? Thus, then, we behold the several States taking separate measures in pursuit of their particular interests, in opposition to the regulations of foreign powers, and separately aiding those powers to defeat the regulations of each other; for, unless the States act together, there is no plan of policy into which they can separately enter, which they will not be separately interested to defeat, and of course all their measures must prove vain and abortive.

"'The policy of each nation in its commercial intercourse with other powers is to obtain, if possible, the principal share of the carriage of the materials of either party, and this can only be effected, by laying higher duties upon imports and exports in foreign vessels, navigated by the subjects of foreign powers, than in those which belong to, and are navigated by those of its own dominions. This principle prevails in a greater or less degree in the regulations of the oldest and wisest commercial nations with respect to each other, and will of course be extended to these States. Unless therefore they possess a reciprocal power, its operation must produce the most mischievous effects. Unable to counteract the restrictions of those powers by similar restrictions here, or to support the interests of their citizens by discriminations in their favor, their system will prevail. Possessing no advantages in the ports of his own country, and subjected to much higher duties and restrictions in those of other powers, it will necessarily become the interest of the American merchant to ship his produce in foreign bottoms; of course their prospects of national consequence must decline, their merchants become only the agents and retailers of those of foreign powers, their extensive forests be hewn down and laid waste to add to their strength and national resources, and the American flag be rarely seen upon the face of the seas.

"'But if they act as a nation, the prospect is more favorable to

them. The particular interests of every State will then be brought forward, and receive a federal support. Happily for them, no measures can be taken to promote the interests of either, which will not equally promote that of the whole. If their commerce is laid under injurious restrictions in foreign ports, by going hand in hand in confidence together, by wise and equitable regulations, they will the more easily sustain the inconvenience, or remedy the evil. If they wish to cement the Union by the strongest ties of interest and affection, if they wish to promote its strength and grandeur founded upon that of each individual State, every consideration of local, as well as of federal policy, urges them to adopt the following recommendation.

"'The situation of the commercial affairs of the Union, requires that the several legislatures should come to the earliest decision on the subject, which they now submit to their consideration. They have weighed it with that profound attention, which is due to so important an object, and are fully convinced of its expedience. A further delay must be productive of inconvenience. The interests, which will vest in every part of the Union, must soon take root and have their influence. The produce raised upon the banks of those great rivers and lakes, which have their sources high up in the interior parts of the continent, will empty itself into the Atlantic in different directions, and of course, as the States growing up at the westward attain maturity and get admission into the confederation, will their government become more complicated. Whether this will be the source of strength and wealth to the Union, must therefore in a great degree depend upon the measures which may be now adopted.

"'A temporary power would not in their opinion enable the United States to establish the interests, nor attain the salutary object, which they propose; the expectation, that it will revert to the States and remain with them for the future, would lessen its weight with foreign powers; and while the interests of each State and of the federal government continue to be the same, the same evils will always require the same correction, and of course the necessary powers should always be lodged in the same hands. They have therefore thought proper to propose an efficient and perpetual remedy.'"

The same subject was soon afterwards brought before the legislature of Virginia, and a series of *Propositions*, which were reported by a committee, elicited much discussion in that body.

COMMERCIAL PROPOSITIONS INTRODUCED BY A COMMITTEE TO THE VIRGINIA HOUSE OF DELEGATES, ON THE 14TH OF NOVEMBER, 1785.

"Whereas the relative situation of the United States has been found on trial to require uniformity in their commercial regulations, as the only effectual policy for obtaining in the ports of foreign nations a stipulation of privileges reciprocal to those enjoyed by the subjects of such nations in the ports of the United States, for preventing animosities, which cannot fail to arise among the several States from the interference of partial and separate regulations, and for deriving from commerce such aids to the public revenue as it ought to contribute; and whereas such uniformity can be best concerted and carried into effect by the federal councils, which, having been instituted for the purpose of managing the interests of the States in cases, which cannot so well be provided for by measures individually pursued, ought to be invested with authority in this case, as being within the reason and policy of their institution;

"Resolved, That the delegates representing this Commonwealth in Congress be instructed to propose in Congress a recommendation to the States in union to authorize that assembly to regulate their trade, and to collect a revenue therefrom, on the following principles, and under the following qualifications;

"1. That the United States in Congress assembled be authorized to prohibit vessels belonging to any nation, which has no commercial treaty with the United States, from entering any of the ports thereof, or to impose any duties on such vessels and their cargoes, which may be judged necessary; all such prohibitions and duties to be uniform throughout the United States, and the proceeds of the latter to be carried into the treasury of the State within which they shall accrue.

"2. That over and above any duties, which may be so laid, the United States in Congress assembled be authorized to collect, in manner prescribed by an Act 'To provide certain and adequate funds for the payment of the State's quota of the debts contracted by the United States,' an impost not exceeding five *per centum ad valorem* on all goods, wares, and merchandises whatsoever, imported into the United States from any foreign ports; such impost to be uniform as aforesaid, and to be carried to the treasury of the United States.

"3. That no State be at liberty to impose duties on any goods,

wares, or merchandises, imported by land or by water from any other State; but may altogether prohibit the importation, from any other State, of any particular species or description of goods, wares, or merchandise, of which the importation is at the same time prohibited from all other places whatsoever.

"4. That no act of Congress, that may be authorized as hereby proposed, shall be entered into by less than two thirds of the confederated States, nor be in force longer than —— years, unless continued by a like proportion of votes within one year immediately preceding the expiration of the said period, or be revived in like manner after the expiration thereof; nor shall any impost whatsoever be collected by virtue of the authority proposed in the second article after the year 17—."

A letter from Mr. Madison, who was at this time a member of the House of Delegates, and may be presumed to have been instrumental in bringing forward the propositions, will explain in what manner they were received by the House.

JAMES MADISON TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

"Richmond, 9 December, 1785.

"DEAR SIR,

"Your favor of the 30th of November was received a few days ago. This would have followed much earlier the one which yours acknowledges, had I not wished it to contain some final information relative to the commercial propositions. The discussion of them has consumed much time; and, though the absolute necessity of some such general system prevailed over all the efforts of its adversaries in the first instance, the stratagem of limiting its duration to a short term has ultimately disappointed our hopes. I think it better to trust to further experience and even distress for an adequate remedy, than to try a temporary measure, which may stand in the way of a permanent one, and must confirm that transatlantic policy, which is founded on our supposed distrust of Congress and of one another.

"Those, whose opposition in this case did not spring from illiberal animosities towards the northern States, seem to have been frightened on one side at the idea of a perpetual and irrevocable grant of power, and on the other flattered with a hope, that a temporary grant would be renewed from time to time, if its utility should be confirmed by the experiment. But we have already granted perpetual and irrevocable powers of a much more extensive nature than those now proposed, and for reasons not stronger than the

reasons which urge the latter. And as to the hope of renewal, it is the most visionary one that perhaps ever deluded men of sense. Nothing but the peculiarity of our circumstances would ever have produced those sacrifices of sovereignty, on which the federal government now rests. If they had been temporary, and the expiration of the term required a renewal at this crisis, pressing as the crisis is, and recent as is our experience of the value of the confederacy, sure I am, that it would be impossible to revive it.

"What room have we then to hope, that the expiration of temporary grants of commercial powers would always find a unanimous disposition in the States to follow their own example. It ought to be remembered too, that, besides the caprice, jealousy, and diversity of situations, which will be certain obstacles in our way, the policy of foreign nations may hereafter imitate that of the Macedonian prince, who effected his purposes against the Grecian confederacy by gaining over a few of the leading men in the smaller members of it. Add to the whole, that the difficulty now found, in obtaining a unanimous concurrence of the States in any measure whatever, must continually increase with every increase of their number, and perhaps in a greater ratio, as the ultramontane States may either have, or suppose they have, a less similitude of interests to the Atlantic States, than these have to one another.

"The propositions, however, have not yet received the final vote of the House, having lain on the table for some time as a report from the committee of the whole. The question was suspended in order to consider a proposition, which had for its object a meeting of politico-commercial commissioners from all the States for the purpose of digesting and reporting the requisite augmentation of the power of Congress over trade. What the event will be, cannot be foreseen. The friends to the original propositions are, I am told, rather increasing; but I despair of a majority in any event for a longer term than twenty-five years for their duration. The other scheme will have fewer enemies, and may perhaps be carried. It seems naturally to grow out of the proposed appointment of commissioners for Virginia and Maryland, concerted at Mount Vernon, for keeping up harmony in the commercial regulations of the two States. Maryland has ratified the report, but has invited into the plan Delaware and Pennsylvania, who will naturally pay the same compliment to their neighbours.

"Besides these general propositions on the subject of trade, it has been proposed, that some intermediate measures should be taken by ourselves, and a sort of navigation act will, I am appre-

hensive, be attempted. It is backed by the mercantile interest of most of our towns, except Alexandria, which alone seems to have liberality or light on the subject. It was refused even to suspend the measure on the concurrence of Maryland or North Carolina. This folly, however, cannot, one would think, brave the ruin which it threatens to our merchants, as well as the people at large, when a final vote comes to be given.

"Kentucky has made a formal application for independence. Her memorial has been considered, and the terms of separation fixed by a committee of the whole. The substance of them is, that all private rights and interests, derived from the laws of Virginia, shall be secured; that the unlocated lands shall be applied to the objects to which the laws of Virginia have appropriated them; that the Ohio shall be a common highway for citizens of the United States, and the jurisdiction of Kentucky and Virginia, as far as the remaining territory of the latter will lie thereon, be concurrent only with the new States on the opposite shore; that the proposed State shall take its due share of our State debts; and that the separation shall not take place unless these terms shall be approved by a convention to be held to decide the question, nor until Congress shall assent thereto, and fix the terms of their admission into the Union. The limits of the proposed State are to be the same with the present limits of the district. The apparent coolness of the representatives of Kentucky, as to a separation, since these terms have been defined, indicates that they had some views, which will not be favored by them. They dislike much to be hung upon the will of Congress. I am, dear Sir, with the highest esteem and unfeigned regard, your obedient humble servant,

"JAMES MADISON."

No. III. p. 230.

OPINIONS OF JAY, KNOX, AND MADISON RESPECTING THE PRINCIPLES AND FEATURES OF A NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

JOHN JAY TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

New York, 7 January, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

They, who regard the public good with more attention and attachment than they do mere personal concerns, must feel and con-

fess the force of such sentiments as are expressed in your letter to me by Colonel Humphreys last fall. The situation of our affairs calls, not only for reflection and prudence, but for exertion. What is to be done? is a common question, but it is a question not easy to answer.

Would the giving of *any* further degree of power to Congress do the business? I am inclined to think it would not; for, among other reasons, it is natural to suppose there will always be members, who will find it convenient to make their seats subservient to partial and personal purposes; and they, who may be able and willing to concert and promote useful and national measures, will seldom be unembarrassed by the ignorance, prejudices, fears, or interested views of others.

In so large a body secrecy and despatch will be too uncommon; and foreign as well as local influence will frequently oppose, and sometimes frustrate, the wisest measures.

Large assemblies often misunderstand or neglect the obligations of character, honor, and dignity; and will collectively do or omit things, which individual gentlemen in private capacities would not approve. As the many divide blame, and also divide credit, too little a portion of either falls to each man's share to affect him strongly, even in cases where the whole blame or the whole credit must be national. It is not easy for those to think and feel as sovereigns, who have always been accustomed to think and feel as subjects. The executive business of sovereignty, depending on so many wills, and those wills moved by such a variety of contradictory motives and inducements, will in general be but feebly done. Such a sovereign, however theoretically responsible, cannot be effectually so, in its departments and offices without adequate judicatories. I therefore promise myself nothing very desirable from any change, which does not divide the sovereignty into its proper departments. Let Congress legislate, let others execute, let others judge.

Shall we have a king? Not, in my opinion, while other expedients remain untried. Might we not have a governor-general limited in his prerogative and duration? Might not Congress be divided into an upper and a lower house; the former appointed for life, the latter annually? And let the governor-general (to preserve the balance), with the advice of a council, formed for that only purpose, of the great judicial officers, have a negative on their acts. Our government should in some degree be suited to our manners and circumstances, and they, you know, are not strictly democratical.

What powers should be granted to the government so constituted, is a question which deserves much thought. I think the more the better; the States retaining only so much as may be necessary for domestic purposes; and all their principal officers, civil and military, being commissioned and removable by the national government. These are short hints; details would exceed the limits of a letter, and to you be superfluous.

A convention is in contemplation, and I am glad to find your name among those of its intended members. To me the policy of such a convention appears questionable. Their authority is to be derived from acts of the State legislatures. Are the State legislatures authorized, either by themselves or others, to alter constitutions? I think not. They, who hold commissions, can by virtue of them neither retrench nor extend the powers conveyed by them. Perhaps it is intended that this convention shall not ordain, but only recommend; if so, there is danger that their recommendations will produce endless discussions, and perhaps jealousies and party heats.

Would it not be better for Congress plainly and in strong terms to declare, that the present federal government is inadequate to the purposes for which it was instituted; that they forbear to point out its particular defects, or to ask for an extension of any particular powers, lest improper jealousies should thence arise; but that, in their opinion, it would be expedient for the people of the States without delay to appoint State conventions (in the way they choose their general assemblies), with the sole and express power of appointing deputies to a general convention; who, or the majority of whom, should take into consideration the articles of confederation, and make such alterations, amendments, and additions thereto, as to them should appear necessary and proper; and which, being by them ordained and published, should have the same force and obligation, which all or any of the present articles now have. No alterations in the government should, I think, be made; nor if attempted will easily take place, unless deducible from the only source of just authority, the people.

Accept, my dear Sir, my warmest and most cordial wishes for your health and happiness, and believe me to be, with the greatest respect and esteem, your most obedient and humble servant,

JOHN JAY.

HENRY KNOX TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

New York, 14 January, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

You ask what prevented the eastern States from attending the September meeting at Annapolis. It is difficult to give a precise answer to this question. Perhaps torpidity in New Hampshire; faction and heats about their paper money in Rhode Island; and jealousy in Connecticut. Massachusetts had chosen delegates to attend, who did not decline until very late, and the finding of other persons to supply their places was attended with delay, so that the convention had broken up, by the time the new-chosen delegates had reached Philadelphia.

With respect to the convention proposed to meet in May, there are different sentiments. Some suppose it an irregular assembly, unauthorized by the confederation, which points out the mode by which any alterations shall be made. Others suppose, that the proposed convention would be totally inadequate to our situation, unless it should make an appeal to the people of every State, and a request to call the State conventions of the people for the sole purpose of choosing delegates to represent them in a general convention of all the United States to consider, revise, amend, or change the federal system in such a manner as to them should seem meet; and to publish the same for general observance, without any reference to the States for acceptance or confirmation. Were this mode practicable, it would certainly be the most summary; and, if the choice of delegates was judicious in proportion to its importance, it might be the most eligible. There are others, who are of opinion, that Congress ought to take up the defects of the present system, point them out to the respective legislatures, and recommend certain alterations.

The recommendations of Congress are attended with so little effect, that any alterations by that means seem to be a hopeless business. Indeed every expedient, which can be proposed, conditioned on a reference back to the legislatures, or State conventions, seems to be of the same nature.

Some gentlemen are apprehensive, that a convention of the nature proposed to meet in May next might devise some expedients to brace up the present defective confederation, so as just to serve to keep us together, while it would prevent those exertions for a national character, which is essential to our happiness; that, in this point of view, it might be attended with the bad effect of assist-

ing us to creep on in our present miserable condition, without a hope of a generous constitution, that should at once shield us from the effects of faction and despotism.

You will see by this sketch, my dear Sir, how various are the opinions of men, and how difficult it will be to bring them to concur in any effective government. I am persuaded, if you were determined to attend the convention, and it should be generally known, it would induce the eastern States to send delegates to it. I should therefore be much obliged for information of your decision on this subject. At the same time the principles of the purest and most respectful friendship induce me to say, that, however strongly I wish for measures, which would lead to national happiness and glory, yet I do not wish you to be concerned in any political operations, of which there are such various opinions. There may indeed arise some solemn occasion, in which you may conceive it to be your duty again to exert your utmost talents to promote the happiness of your country. But this occasion must be of an unequivocal nature, in which the enlightened and virtuous citizens should generally concur.

Notwithstanding the contrary opinions respecting the proposed convention, were I to presume to give my own judgment, it would be in favor of the convention; and I sincerely hope that it may be generally attended. I do not flatter myself, that the public mind is so sufficiently informed and harmonized, as that an effective government would be adopted by the convention, and proposed to the United States, or, if this were practicable, that the people of the several States are sufficiently prepared to receive it. But it seems to be highly important, that some object should be held forth to the people, as a remedy for the disorders of the body politic. Were this done by so respectable a set of men as would be sent to the convention, even if it were not so perfect in the first instance as it might be afterwards, yet it would be a stage in the business, and men's minds would be exercised on the subject, and inclined towards a good constitution. Were strong events to arise between this and the time of meeting, enforcing the necessity of a vigorous government, it would be a preparation, which might be embraced by the convention, to propose at once an efficient system. Although it may be confessed, that a convention, originating from the respective legislatures, instead of the people themselves, is not the regular mode pointed out by the confederation, yet, as our system, in the opinion of men of reflection, is so very defective, it may reasonably be doubted whether the

constitutional mode of amendment would be adequate to our critical situation. If, on an examination, this should be found to be the case, the proposed convention may be the best expedient, that could be devised. Unrestrained by forms, it would be able to consider every proposition fully, and decide agreeably to the sentiments of the majority. But in a body constituted as Congress is, a single member frequently may frustrate the opinions of seventeen eighteenths of the United States, assembled by representation in that body. There is a variety of other reasons, which, in my mind, have the influence to induce a preference for the convention; but the different opinions respecting it will probably prevent a general attendance.

In my former letters I mentioned, that men of reflection and principle were tired of the imbecilities of the present government; but I did not point out any substitute. It would be prudent to form the plan of a new house, before we pull down the old one. The subject has not been sufficiently discussed as yet in public to decide precisely on the form of the edifice. It is out of all question, that the foundation must be of republican principles, but so modified and wrought together, that whatever shall be erected thereon should be durable and efficient.

I speak entirely of the federal government, or, which would be better, *one government*, instead of an association of governments. Were it possible to effect a general government of this kind, it might be constituted of an assembly, or lower house, chosen for one, two, or three years; a senate chosen for five, six, or seven years; and the executive, under the title of governor-general, chosen by the assembly and senate for the term of seven years, but liable to an impeachment of the lower house, and triable by the senate. A judiciary to be appointed by the governor-general during good behaviour, but impeachable by the lower house, and triable by the senate. The laws passed by the general government to be obeyed by the local governments, and, if necessary, to be enforced by a body of armed men, to be kept for the purposes, which should be designated. All national objects to be designed and executed by the general government, without any reference to the local governments. This mere sketch is considered as the government of the least possible powers to preserve the confederated governments. To attempt to establish less will be to hazard the existence of republicanism, and to subject us either to a division by the European powers, or to a despotism arising from high-handed commotions.

I have thus, my dear Sir, obeyed what seemed to be your desire, and given you the ideas which have presented themselves from reflection, and the opinion of others. May Heaven direct us to the best means for the dignity and happiness of the United States. I am, my dear Sir, &c.

HENRY KNOX.

JAMES MADISON TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

New York, 16 April, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I have been honored with your letter of the 31st of March, and find with much pleasure, that your views of the reform, which ought to be pursued by the convention, give a sanction to those which I have entertained. Temporizing applications will dishonor the councils, which propose them, and may foment the internal malignity of the disease, at the same time that they produce an ostensible palliation of it. Radical attempts, although unsuccessful, will at least justify the authors of them.

Having been lately led to revolve the subject, which is to undergo the discussion of the convention, and formed in my mind some outlines of a new system, I take the liberty of submitting them without apology to your eye.

Conceiving that an individual independence of the States is totally irreconcilable with their aggregate sovereignty, and that a consolidation of the whole into one simple republic would be as inexpedient as it is unattainable, I have sought for some middle ground, which may at once support a due supremacy of the national authority, and not exclude the local authorities wherever they can be subordinately useful.

I would propose as the groundwork, that a change be made in the principle of representation. According to the present form of the Union, in which the intervention of the States is in all great cases necessary to effectuate the measures of Congress, an equality of suffrage does not destroy the inequality of importance in the several members. No one will deny, that Virginia and Massachusetts have more weight and influence, both within and without Congress, than Delaware or Rhode Island. Under a system, which would operate in many essential points without the intervention of the State legislatures, the case would be materially altered. A vote in the national councils from Delaware would then have the same effect and value, as one from the largest State in the Union. I am ready to believe, that such a change will not be

attended with much difficulty; a majority of the States, and those of the greatest influence, will regard it as favorable to them. To the northern States it will be recommended by their present populousness; to the southern, by their expected advantage in this respect. The less States must in every event yield to the predominant will. But the consideration, which particularly urges a change in the representation, is, that it will obviate the principal objections of the larger States to the necessary concessions of power.

I would propose next, that, in addition to the present federal powers, the national government should be armed with positive and complete authority in all cases, which require uniformity; such as the regulation of trade, including the right of taxing both exports and imports, the fixing of the terms and forms of naturalization, &c.

Over and above this positive power, a negative *in all cases whatsoever* on the legislative acts of the States, as heretofore exercised by the kingly prerogative, appears to me to be absolutely necessary, and to be the least possible encroachment on the State jurisdictions. Without this defensive power, every positive power, that can be given on paper, will be evaded and defeated. The States will continue to invade the national jurisdiction, to violate treaties and the law of nations, and to harass each other with rival and spiteful measures dictated by mistaken views of interest. Another happy effect of this prerogative would be its control over the internal vicissitudes of State policy, and the aggressions of interested majorities on the rights of minorities and of individuals. The great desideratum, which has not yet been found for republican governments, seems to be some disinterested and dispassionate umpire in disputes between different passions and interests in the State. The majority, who alone have the right of decision, have frequently an interest real or supposed in abusing it. In monarchies the sovereign is more neutral to the interests and views of different parties; but unfortunately he too often forms interests of his own, repugnant to those of the whole. Might not the national prerogative here suggested be found sufficiently disinterested for the decision of local questions of policy, whilst it would itself be sufficiently restrained from the pursuit of interests adverse to those of the whole society? There has not been any moment since the peace, at which the representatives of the Union would have given an assent to paper money or any other measure of a kindred nature.

The national supremacy ought also to be extended, as I conceive,

to the judiciary departments. If those, who are to expound and apply the laws, are connected by their interests and their oaths with the particular States wholly, and not with the Union, the participation of the Union in the making of the laws may be possibly rendered unavailing. It seems, at least, necessary that the oaths of the judges should include a fidelity to the general as well as local constitution, and that an appeal should lie to some national tribunals in all cases to which foreigners or inhabitants of other States may be parties. The admiralty jurisdiction seems to fall entirely within the purview of the national government.

The national supremacy in the executive departments is liable to some difficulty, unless the officers administering them could be made appointable by the supreme government. The militia ought certainly to be placed, in some form or other, under the authority which is entrusted with the general protection and defence.

A government composed of such extensive powers should be well organized and balanced. The legislative department might be divided into two branches, one of them chosen every ——— years by the people at large, or by the legislatures; the other to consist of fewer members, to hold their places for a longer term, and to go out in such a rotation as always to leave in office a large majority of old members. Perhaps the negative on the laws might be most conveniently exercised by this branch. As a further check, a council of revision including the great ministerial officers, might be superadded.

A national executive must also be provided. I have scarcely ventured as yet to form my own opinion either of the manner in which it ought to be constituted, or of the authorities with which it ought to be clothed.

An article should be inserted expressly guarantying the tranquillity of the States against internal as well as external dangers.

In like manner the right of coercion should be expressly declared. With the resources of commerce in hand, the national administration might always find means of exerting it either by sea or land. But the difficulty and awkwardness of operating by force on the collective will of a State render it particularly desirable, that the necessity of it might be precluded. Perhaps the negative on the laws might create such a mutuality of dependence between the general and particular authorities, as to answer this purpose; or perhaps some defined objects of taxation might be submitted, along with commerce, to the general authority.

To give a new system its proper validity and energy, a ratifica-

tion must be obtained from the people, and not merely from the ordinary authority of the legislatures. This will be the more essential, as inroads on the *existing constitutions* of the States will be unavoidable.

The enclosed address to the States on the subject of the treaty of peace has been agreed to by Congress, and forwarded to the several executives. We foresee the irritation, which it will excite in many of our countrymen; but could not withhold our approbation of the measure. Both the resolutions on the addresses passed without a dissenting voice.

Congress continues to be thin, and of course to do little business of importance. The settlement of the public accounts, the disposition of the public lands, and arrangements with Spain, are subjects which claim their particular attention. As a step towards the first, the treasury board are charged with the task of reporting a plan by which the final decision on the claims of the States will be handed over from Congress to a select set of men, bound by the oaths, and clothed with the powers, of chancellors. As to the second article, Congress have it themselves under consideration. Between six and seven hundred thousand acres have been surveyed, and are ready for sale. The mode of sale, however, will probably be a source of different opinions; as will the mode of disposing of the unsurveyed residue. The eastern gentlemen remain attached to the scheme of townships. Many others are equally strenuous for indiscriminate locations. The States, which have lands of their own for sale, are suspected of not being hearty in bringing the federal lands to market. The business with Spain is becoming extremely delicate, and the information from the western settlements truly alarming.

A motion was made some days ago for an adjournment of Congress for a short period, and an appointment of Philadelphia for their reassembling. The eccentricity of this place, as well with regard to east and west as to north and south, has I find been for a considerable time a thorn in the minds of many of the southern members. Suspicion too has charged some important votes on the weight thrown by the present position of Congress into the eastern scale, and predicts that the eastern members will never concur in any substantial provision or movement for a proper permanent seat for the national government, while they remain so much gratified by its temporary residence. These seem to have been the operating motives with those on one side, who were not locally interested in the removal. On the other side, the motives are obvious.

Those of real weight were drawn from the apparent caprice with which Congress might be reproached, and particularly from the peculiarity of the existing moment. I own, that I think so much regard due to these considerations, that, notwithstanding the powerful ones on the other side, I should have assented with great repugnance to the motion, and would even have voted against it, if any probability had existed, that, by waiting for a proper time, a proper measure might not be lost for a very long time. The plan, which I should have judged most eligible, would have been to fix on the removal whenever a vote could be obtained, but so as that it should not take effect until the commencement of the ensuing federal year; and, if an immediate removal had been resolved on, I had intended to propose such a change in the plan. No final question was taken in the case; some preliminary questions showed that six States were in favor of the motion. Rhode Island, the seventh, was at first on the same side; and Mr. Varnum, one of her delegates, continues so. His colleague was overcome by the solicitations of his eastern brethren. As neither Maryland nor South Carolina was on the floor, it seems pretty evident that New York has a very precarious tenure of the advantages derived from the abode of Congress.

We understand, that the discontents in Massachusetts, which lately produced an appeal to the sword, are now producing a trial of strength in the field of electioneering. The governor will be displaced. The Senate is said to be already of a popular complexion, and it is expected the other branch will be still more so. Paper money, it is surmised, will be the engine to be played off against creditors both public and private. As the event of the elections, however, is not yet decided, this information must be too much blended with conjecture to be regarded as matter of certainty.

I do not learn, that the proposed act relating to Vermont has yet gone through all the stages of legislation here; nor can I say whether it will finally pass or not. In truth, it having not been a subject of conversation for some time, I am unable to say what has been done, or is likely to be done with it. With the sincerest affection, and the highest esteem, I have the honor to be, dear Sir, your devoted servant,

JAMES MADISON.

No. IV. p. 249.

AN ABSTRACT OF THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ANCIENT AND MODERN CONFEDERACIES.*

LYCIAN CONFEDERACY.

In this confederacy the number of votes allotted to each member was proportioned to its pecuniary contributions. The judges and town magistrates were elected by the general authority in like proportion. Montesquieu prefers this mode.

The name of a federal republic may be refused to Lycia, which Montesquieu cites as an example in which the importance of the members determined the proportion of their votes in the general councils. The Grison League is a juster example.

AMPHICTYONIC CONFEDERACY.

Instituted by Amphictyon son of Deucalion king of Athens, 1522 years before Christ. Seated first at Thermopylæ, then at Delphos. Afterwards at these places alternately. It met half yearly, to wit, in the spring and fall, besides extraordinary occasions. In the latter meetings all such of the Greeks as happened to be at Delphos on a religious errand were admitted to deliberate, but not to vote.

The number and names of the confederated cities differently reported. The Union seems to have consisted originally of the Delphians and their neighbours only, and by degrees to have comprehended all Greece. Ten, eleven, twelve, are the different numbers of original members mentioned by different authors.

Each city sent two deputies, one to attend particularly to religious matters, the other to civil and criminal matters affecting individuals. Both to decide on matters of a general nature. Sometimes more than two were sent, but they had two votes only.

* This abstract is found among the Mount Vernon Papers in General Washington's handwriting. It is valuable for the matter it contains, and interesting as an evidence of his minute inquiry, and the close attention he paid to a subject, which, at the time it appears to have been written, was the most important that could occupy the thoughts of an American statesman. I can give no other account of the manuscript, than that it exists among his papers. It could hardly have been drawn up originally by him, as several works are cited, which are written in languages, that he did not understand. The references to authorities in the manuscript are so imperfect, that it has been found necessary to omit them.

The Amphictyons took an oath mutually to defend the united cities; to inflict vengeance on those who should sacrilegiously despoil the temple at Delphos; to punish the violators of this oath; and never to divert the water-courses of any of their Amphictyonic cities either in peace or in war.

The Amphictyonic council was instituted by way of defence and terror of the barbarians.

Federal Authority.

The Amphictyons had full power to propose and resolve whatever they judged useful to Greece.

1. They judged, in the last resort, all differences between the Amphictyonic cities.
2. Mulcted the aggressors.
3. Employed the whole force against such as refused to execute its decrees.
4. Guarded the immense riches of the temple at Delphos, and decided controversies between the inhabitants and those who came to consult the oracle.
5. Superintended the Pythian games.
6. Exercised the right of admitting new members.
7. Appointed a general of the federal troops, with full powers to carry their decrees into execution.
8. Declared and carried on war.

Strabo says, that the council of Amphictyons was dissolved in the time of Augustus; but Pausanias, who lived in the time of Antoninus Pius, says it remained entire then, and that the number of Amphictyons was thirty. The institution declined on the admission of Philip, and in the time of the Roman emperors the functions of the council were reduced to the administration and police of the temple. This limited authority expired only with the pagan religion.

Vices of the Constitution.

It happened but too often, that the deputies of the strongest cities awed and corrupted those of the weaker, and that judgment went in favor of the most powerful party.

Greece was the victim of Philip. If her confederation had been stricter, and been persevered in, she would never have yielded to Macedon, and might have proved a barrier to the vast projects of Rome.

The execution of the Amphictyonic powers was very different from the theory. It did not restrain the parties from warring against each other. Athens and Sparta were members during their conflict. *Quære*, whether Thucydides or Xenophon in their histories ever alluded to the Amphictyonic authority, which ought to have kept the peace.

ACHÆAN CONFEDERACY.

This league in the one hundred and twenty-fourth Olympiad. The Patrians and Dymæans joined first in this league. It consisted at first of three small cities. Aratus added Sicyon, and drew in many other cities of Achaia and Peloponnesus. Of these he formed a republic of a peculiar sort.

It consisted of twelve cities, and was produced by the necessity of such a defence against the Etolians.

The members enjoyed a perfect equality, each of them sending the same number of deputies to the senate.

The senate assembled in the spring and fall, and was also convened on extraordinary occasions by two Prætors, charged with the administration during the recess, but who could execute nothing without the consent of ten inspectors.

Federal Authority.

1. The senate, composed of the deputies, made war and peace.
2. Appointed a captain-general annually.
3. Transferred the power of deciding to ten citizens taken from the deputies, the rest retaining a right of consultation only.
4. Sent and received ambassadors.
5. Appointed a prime minister.
6. Contracted foreign alliances.
7. Confederated cities in a manner forced to receive the same laws and customs, weights and measures, yet considered as having each their independent police and magistrates.

Vices of the Constitution.

The defect of subjection in the members to the general authority ruined the whole body. The Romans seduced the members from the league, by representing that it violated their sovereignty.

After the death of Alexander, this union was dissolved by various dissensions, raised chiefly through the arts of the kings of Mace-

don. Every city was now engaged in a separate interest, and no longer acted in concert. Afterwards, in the one hundred and twenty-fourth Olympiad, they saw their error and began to think of returning to their former state. This was the time Pyrrhus invaded Italy.

HELVETIC CONFEDERACY.

Commenced in 1308 by the temporary, and in 1315 by the perpetual union of Uri, Schweitz, and Underwald, for the defence of their liberties against the invasions of the House of Austria. In 1313 the number of thirteen was completed by the accession of Appenzel.

The general diet representing the United Cantons is composed of two deputies from each. Some of their allies, as the Abbot of St. Gall, are allowed by long usage to attend by their deputies.

All general diets are held at such time and place as Zurich, which is first in rank and the depository of the common archives, shall name in a circular summons. But the occasion of annual conferences for the administration of their dependent bailiwicks has fixed the same time, to wit, the feast of St. John, for the general diet, and the city of Frauenfeld in Turgovia is now the place of meeting. Formerly it was the city of Baden.

The diet is opened by a complimentary address of the first deputy of each canton by turns, called *the Helvetic salutation*. It consists of a congratulatory review of circumstances and events favorable to their common interests, and of exhortations to union and patriotism.

The deputies of the first canton, Zurich, propose the matters to be discussed. Questions are decided by a plurality of voices. In case of division, the bailiff of Turgovia has the casting one. The session of the diet continues about a month.

After the objects of universal concern are despatched, such of the deputies, whose constituents have no share in the dependent bailiwicks, withdraw, and the diet then becomes a representation of the cantons to whom these bailiwicks belong, and proceeds to the consideration of the business relating thereto.

Extraordinary diets for incidental business, or giving audience to foreign ministers, may be called at any time by any one of the cantons, or by any foreign minister, who will defray the expense of the meeting. Seldom a year without an extraordiary diet.

There is an annual diet of twelve cantons by one deputy from each for the affairs of the ultramontane bailiwicks.

Particular cantons also have their diets for their particular affairs; the time and place for the meeting of which are settled by the particular treaties.

All public affairs are now treated, not in general diet, but in the particular assemblies of Protestant and Catholic cantons.

Federal Authority.

The title of republic and sovereign state is improperly given to this confederacy, which has no concentred authority, the diet being only a congress of delegates from some or all of the cantons, and having no fixed objects that are national.

The thirteen cantons do not make one commonwealth like the United Provinces, but are so many independent commonwealths in strict alliance. There is not so much as any common instrument by which they are all reciprocally bound together; the three primitive cantons alone being each directly allied to the other twelve. The others in many instances are connected indirectly only, as allies of allies. In this mode any one canton may draw in all the others to make a common cause in its defence.

The confederacy has no common treasury, no common troops, no common coin, no common judiciary, nor any other common mark of sovereignty.

The general diet cannot terminate any interesting affair without special instructions and powers; and the deputies accordingly take most matters proposed *ad referendum.*

The cantons individually exercise the right of sending and receiving ambassadors, making treaties, coining money, proscribing the money of one another, prohibiting the importation and exportation of merchandise, furnishing troops to foreign states and doing every thing else, which does not wound the liberty of any other canton. Excepting a few cases, specified in the alliances, and which directly concern the object of the league, no canton is subjected to the resolutions of the plurality.

The only establishment truly national is that of a federal army, as regulated in 1668, and which is no more than an eventual plan of defence adopted among so many allied states.

1. The league consists in a perpetual defensive engagement against external attacks and internal troubles. It may be regarded as an axiom in the public law of the confederacy, that the federal engagements are precedent to all other political engagements of the cantons.

2. Another axiom is, that there are no particular or common

possessions of the cantons, for the defence of which the others are not bound as guarantees or auxiliaries of guarantees.

3. All disputes are to be submitted to neutral cantons, who may employ force if necessary in the execution of their decrees. Each party to choose four judges, who may, in case of disagreement, choose umpires. And these under oath of impartiality to pronounce definitive sentence, which all the cantons are to enforce.

4. No canton ought to form new alliances without the consent of the others. This was stipulated in consequence of an improper alliance in 1442 by Zurich with the House of Austria.

5. It is an essential object of the league to preserve interior tranquillity, by the reciprocal protection of the forms of government established in each canton, so that each is armed with the force of the whole corps for the suppression of rebellious revolts, and the history of Switzerland affords frequent instances of mutual succours for these purposes. The cantons are bound not to give shelter to fugitives from justice, in consequence of which each canton can at this day banish malefactors from all the territories of the league.

7. Though each canton may prohibit the exportation and importation of merchandise, it must allow it to pass through from one neighbouring canton to another without any augmentation of the tolls.

8. In claiming succours against foreign powers, the eight elder cantons have a more extensive right than the five junior ones. The former may demand them of one another without explaining the motives of the quarrel. The latter cannot intermeddle but as mediators or auxiliaries; nor can they commence hostilities without the sanction of the confederates; and, if cited by their adversaries, cannot refuse to accept the other cantons for arbitrators or judges.

9. In general each canton is to pay its own forces without compensation from the whole, or the succoured party. But in case a siege is to be formed for the benefit of a particular canton, this is to defray the expense of it, and, if for common benefit, each is to pay its just proportion. On no pretext is a canton to be forced to march its troops out of the limits of Switzerland.

10. Foreign ministers from different nations reside in different cantons. Such of them as have a letter of credence for the whole confederacy address them to Zurich the chief canton. The ambassador from France, who has most to do with the confederacy, is complimented at his quarters by deputies from the whole body.

Vices of the Constitution.

1. Disparity in the size of the cantons.
2. Different principles of government in different cantons.
3. Intolerance in religion.
4. Weakness of the union. The common bailiwicks, which served as a cement, sometimes became occasions of quarrels.

In a treaty in 1683 with Victor Amadæus, of Savoy, it is stipulated, that he shall interpose as mediator in disputes between the cantons, and if necessary use force against the party refusing to submit to the sentence. A striking proof of the want of authority in the whole over its parts.

BELGIC CONFEDERACY.

Established in 1679 by the treaty called the union of Utrecht.

The provinces came into this union slowly. Guilderland, the smallest of them, made many difficulties. Even some of the cities and towns pretended to annex conditions to their acceding.

When the union was originally established, a committee composed of deputies from each province was appointed to regulate affairs, and to convoke the provinces according to the nineteenth article of the treaty. Out of this committee grew the States-General; who, strictly speaking, are only the representatives of the States-General, who amount to eight hundred members.

The number of deputies to the States-General from each province is not limited, but has only a single voice. They amount commonly altogether to forty or fifty. They hold their seats some for life, some for six, three, and one years; and those of Groningen and Overyssel during pleasure. They are paid, but very moderately, by their respective constituents, and are amenable to their tribunals only.

No military man is deputable to the States-General.

Ambassadors of the republic have a seat and deliberation, but no suffrage in the States-General.

The Grand Pensioner of Holland attends always in the States-General, and makes the propositions of that province to the States-General.

They sit constantly at the Hague since 1593, and every day in the week except Saturday and Sunday. The States of Holland in granting this residence reserve, by way of protestation, the rights, the honors, and prerogatives belonging to them as sovereigns of the

province; yielding to the States-General only a rank in certain public ceremonies.

The eldest deputy from each province presides for a week by turns. The president receives letters &c. from the ministers of the republic at foreign courts, and those of foreign ministers residing at the Hague, as well as all petitions presented to the assembly; all which he causes to be read by the secretary.

The secretary, besides correcting and recording the resolutions, prepares and despatches instructions to ministers abroad, and letters to foreign powers. He assists also at conferences held with foreign ministers, *and there gives his voice.* He has a deputy when there is not a second secretary. The agent of the States-General is charged with the archives, and is also employed on occasions of receiving foreign ministers or sending messages to them.

Federal Authority.

The avowed objects of the treaty of union;

1. To fortify the union.

2. To repel the common enemy.

The union is to be perpetual in the same manner as if the confederates formed one province only, without prejudice however to the privileges and rights of each province and city.

Differences between provinces and between cities are to be settled by the ordinary judges, by arbitration, and by amicable agreement, without the interference of other provinces, otherwise than by way of accommodation. The Stadtholder is to decide such differences in the last resort.

No change is to be made in the articles of union, without the unanimous consent of the parties, and every thing done contrary to them is to be null and void.

States-General,

1. Execute, without consulting their constituents, treaties and alliances already formed.

2. Take oaths from generals and governors, and appoint field-deputies.

3. The collection of duties on imports and exports, and the expedition of safe-conducts, are in their name and by their officers.

4. They superintend and examine the accounts of the East India Company.

5. Inspect the mint, appoint *les maîtres de la monnoie,* and fix

la taille et la valeur of the coin, always having regard to the regular rights of the provinces within their own frontiers.

6. Appoint a treasurer-general and receiver-general of the quotas furnished by the provinces.

7. Elect out of a double nomination the fiscal and other officers within the departments of the admiralties, except that the high officers of the fleet are appointed by the admiral-general, to whom the maritime provinces have ceded this right. The navy is supported by duties on foreign trade, appropriated thereto for the benefit of the whole republic.

8. They govern as sovereigns the dependent territories, according to the several capitulations, &c.

9. They form committees of their own body, of a member from each deputation, for foreign affairs, finances, marine and other matters. At all their conferences the Grand Pensioner of Holland, and the Secretary of the States-General, attend and have a decided voice.

10. They appoint and receive ambassadors, negotiate with foreign powers, deliberate on war, peace, alliances, the raising of forces, care of fortifications, military affairs *to a certain degree*, the equipment of fleets, building of ships, and directions concerning money. But they can neither make peace nor war, nor truces, nor treaties, nor raise troops, nor impose taxes, nor do other acts requiring unanimity, without consulting and obtaining the sanction of the provinces. Coining money also requires unanimity and the express sanction of the provinces. The repealing of an old law is on the same footing. In points not enumerated in this article, a plurality of voices decides.

11. The composition and publication of edicts and proclamations, relative both to objects expressed in the articles of union, and to the measures taken for the common good, are in the name of the states; and though they are addressed to the states of the provinces, who announce them with their sanction, still it is in the name of the States-General, that obedience is required of all the inhabitants of the provinces.

The Provinces have reserved to themselves,

1. Their sovereignty within their own limits in general.

2. The right of coining money as essential to sovereignty, but have agreed at the same time, that the money, which should be current throughout the republic, should have the same intrinsic value. To give effect to which regulation, a mint is established at the Hague under a Chamber, which has the inspection of all

money struck either in the name of the States-General, or particular provinces, as also of foreign coins. Coining money is not in the provinces or cities, but in the generality of the union by common agreement. Every province raises what money, and by what means, it pleases, and sends its quota to the receiver-general. The quotas were not settled without great difficulty.

3. The naming to governments of towns within themselves, keeping keys and giving word to magistrates, a power over troops in all things not military, conferring colonels' commissions and inferior posts in such regiments as are paid by the provinces respectively, taking oaths of fidelity, concerning a revocation of all which the States-General are not permitted to deliberate.

The Provinces are restricted,

1. From entering into any foreign treaties, without consent of the rest.

2. From establishing imposts prejudicial to others, without general consent.

3. From charging their neighbours with higher duties than their own subjects.

Council of State.

Composed of deputies from the provinces, in different proportions. Three of them are for life; the rest generally for three years. They vote *per capita.*

They are subordinate to the States-General, who frequently, however, consult with them. In matters of war, which require secrecy, they act of themselves. Military and fiscal matters are the objects of their administration.

They execute the resolves of the States-General, propose requisitions of men and money, and superintend the fortifications, and the affairs, revenues, and governments of the conquered possessions.

Chamber of Accounts.

Was erected for the ease of the Council of State. It is subordinate to the States-General, and is composed of two deputies from each province, who are changed triennially. They examine and state all accounts of the several receivers; and control and register orders of the Council of State, disposing of the finances.

College of Admiralty.

Established by the States-General 1597. It is subdivided into five, of which Holland has three, one in Zealand, one in Friesland; each composed of seven deputies, four appointed by the province where the Admiralty resides, and three by the other provinces. The Vice-Admiral presides in all of them when he is present.

They take final cognizance of all crimes and prizes at sea, of all fraud in customs, provide quotas of fleets resolved on by the States-General, appoint captains and superior officers of each squadron, take final cognizance of civil matters within six hundred florins, an appeal lying to the States-General for matters beyond that sum.

The authority of the States-General in the admiralty department is much limited by the influence and privileges of the maritime provinces, and the jurisdiction herein is full of confusion and contradiction.

Stadtholder,

Who is now hereditary, in his *political* capacity is authorized,

1. To settle differences between provinces provisionally, till other methods can be agreed on, which having never been, this prerogative may be deemed a permanent one.

2. To assist at the deliberations of the States-General and their particular conferences. He recommends and influences appointments of ambassadors.

3. Has a seat and suffrage in the Council of State.

4. Presides in the provincial courts of justice, where his name is prefixed to all public acts.

5. Supreme curator of most of the universities.

6. As Stadtholder of the provinces, he has considerable rights partaking of the sovereignty, as appointing town magistrates on presentation made to him of a certain number, and executing provincial decrees.

7. Gives audience to ambassadors, and may have agents with their sovereigns for his private affairs.

8. Exercises the power of pardon.

In his *military* capacity as captain-general,

1. Commands forces, directs marches, provides for garrisons, and in general regulates military affairs.

2. Disposes of all appointments from ensigns to colonels; the Council of State having surrendered to him the appointments within

their disposal. The States-General appoint the higher grades on his recommendation.

3. Disposes of the governments of the fortified towns, though the commissions issue from the States-General.

In his *marine* capacity as admiral-general,

1. Superintends and directs every thing relative to naval forces and other affairs within the admiralty.

2. Presides in the admiralties in person or by proxy.

3. Appoints lieutenant-admirals and officers under them.

4. Establishes councils of war, whose sentences are in the name of the States-General and his Highness, and are not executed till he approves.

The Stadtholder has a general and secret influence on the great machine, which cannot be defined.

His revenue from appointments amounts to three hundred thousand florins, to which is to be added his extensive patrimonies.

Vices of the Constitution.

The union of Utrecht imparts an authority to the States-General seemingly sufficient to secure harmony; but the jealousy, in each province, of its sovereignty renders the practice very different from the theory.

It is clear, that the delay occasioned by recurring to seven independent provinces, including about fifty-two voting cities, is a vice in the Belgic republic, which exposes it to the most fatal inconveniences. Accordingly the fathers of their country have endeavoured to remedy it, in the extraordinary assemblies of the States-General in 1584, 1651, 1716, 1717, but unhappily without effect. This vice is notwithstanding deplorable.

Among other evils, it gives foreign ministers the means of arresting the most important deliberations, by gaining a single province or city.

This was done by France in 1726, when the treaty of Hanover was delayed a whole year. In 1688 the States concluded a treaty of themselves, but at the risk of their heads.

It is the practice, also, in matters of contribution or subsidy, to pass over this article of the union; for, where delay would be dangerous the consenting provinces furnish their quotas without waiting for the others; but by such means the union is weakened, and, if often repeated, must be dissolved.

Foreign ministers elude matters taken *ad referendum*, by tampering with the provinces and cities.

The treaty of union obliges each province to levy certain contributions. But this article never could, and probably never will, be executed, because the inland provinces, which have little commerce, cannot pay an equal quota.

Deputations from agreeing to disagreeing provinces are frequent.

It is certain, that so many independent corps and interests could not be kept together, without such a centre of union as the Stadtholdership, as has been allowed and repeated in so many solemn acts.

In the intermission of the Stadtholdership, Holland, by her riches and authority, which drew the others into a sort of dependence, supplied the place.

With such a government, the union never could have subsisted, if in effect the provinces had not within themselves a spring capable of quickening their tardiness, and impelling them to the same way of thinking. This spring is the Stadtholder. His prerogatives are immense; a strange effect of human contradictions. Men, too jealous to confide their liberty to their representatives, who are their equals, abandoned it to a prince, who might the more easily abuse it, as the affairs of the republic were important, and had not then fixed themselves.

Grotius has said, that the hatred of his countrymen against the House of Austria kept them from being destroyed by the vices of their constitution.

The difficulty of procuring unanimity has induced a breach of fundamentals in several instances. The treaty of Westphalia was concluded without the consent of Zealand. These tend to alter the constitution.

It appears by several articles of the union, that the confederates had formed the design of establishing a general tax (impost), to be administered by the States-General, but this design, so proper for bracing this happy union, has not been executed.

GERMANIC CONFEDERACY.

The diet is to be convoked by the Emperor, or, on his failure, by the Archbishop of Mentz, with the consent of the Electors, once in ten years at least from the last adjournment, and six months before the time of meeting. Ratisbon has been the seat of the diet since 1663.

The members amount to two hundred and eighty-five, and compose three colleges, namely, that of electors, of princes, and of imperial cities; the voices amounting to one hundred and fifty-nine,

of which one hundred and fifty-three are individual, and six collective. The latter are peculiar to the college of princes, and are formed out of thirty-nine prelates &c., and ninety-three counts &c. The individual voices are common to the three colleges, and are given by nine electors, and ninety-four princes, thirty-three of the ecclesiastical and sixty-one of the secular branch, and fifty imperial cities, thirteen of the Rhenish and thirty-seven of the Suabian bench. The King of Prussia has nine voices in as many different capacities.

The three colleges assemble in the same house, but in different apartments.

The Emperor, as head of the Germanic body, is president of the diet. He and others are represented by proxies at present.

The deliberations are grounded on propositions from the Emperor, and commence in the college of electors, from whence they pass to that of the princes, and thence to that of the imperial cities. They are not resolutions, till they have been passed in each. When the electors and princes cannot agree, they confer, but do not confer with the imperial cities. A plurality of voices decides in each college, except in matters of religion and a few reserved cases, in which, according to the treaty of Westphalia and the imperial capitulations, the empire is divided into the Catholic and Evangelic corps.

After the resolutions have passed the three colleges, they are presented to the representative of the Emperor, without whose ratification they are null. They are called *placita*, after passing the three colleges; *conclusa*, after ratification by the Emperor.

The collection of acts of one diet is called the *recess*, which cannot be made up and have the force of law, till the close of the diet. The subsisting diet has not been closed for more than a hundred years; of course it has furnished no effective resolution, though a great number of interesting ones have passed. This delay proceeds from the imperial courts, who refuse to grant a *recess*, notwithstanding the frequent and pressing applications made for one.

Federal Authority.

The powers, as well as the organization of the diet, have varied at different times. Anciently it elected, as a corps, the Emperors, and judged of their conduct; anciently it regulated tolls; at present the electors alone do this.

The treaty of Westphalia, and the capitulations of the Emperor from Charles the Fifth downwards, define the present powers of the diet. These concern, 1. The legislation of the empire. 2. War,

peace, and alliances. 3. Raising troops. 4. Contributions. 5. Construction of fortresses. 6. Money. 7. Ban of the empire. 8. Admission of new princes. 9. The supreme tribunal. 10. Disposition of grand fiefs and grand charges. In all these points the Emperor and diet must concur.

The ban of the empire is a sort of proscription, by which the disturbers of the public peace are punished. The offender's life and goods are at the mercy of every one. Formerly the Emperors themselves pronounced the ban against those, who offended them. It has been since so regulated, that no one shall be exposed to the ban without the examination and consent of the diet.

By the ban the party is outlawed, degraded from all his federal rights, his subjects absolved from their allegiance, and his possessions forfeited.

The ban is incurred when the Emperor, or one of the supreme tribunals, addresses an order to any one, on pain, in case of disobedience, of being proscribed *ipso facto*.

The Circles

Formerly were in number six only. There are now ten. They were instituted for the more effectual preservation of the public peace, and the execution of the decrees of the diet and supreme tribunals, against contumacious members; for which purposes they have their particular diets with the chief princes of the circle at their head, have particular officers for commanding the forces of the circle, levy contributions, see that justice is duly administered, that the coin is not debased, and that the customs are not unduly raised.

If a circle fails to send its due succours, it is to pay the damages suffered therefrom to its neighbours. If a member of the circle refuse, the college of the circle is to admonish; and, if this be insufficient, the delinquent party is to be compelled under sentence from the imperial chamber.

Aulic Council.

Established by the diet in 1512. Composed of members appointed by the Emperor.

The cognizance is restrained to matters above two thousand crowns. Concurrent with the jurisdiction of the imperial chamber in controversies between the states; also in those of subjects of the empire by way of appeal from subaltern tribunals of the empire,

and from sovereign tribunals of princes. Arms are to be used for carrying its decrees into execution.

Imperial Chamber.

Established in 1495 by the diet, as a means of public peace, by deciding controversies between members of the empire.

This is the first tribunal of the empire. It has an appellate jurisdiction in all civil and fiscal causes, or when the public peace may be concerned. It has a concurrent jurisdiction with the Aulic Council; and causes cannot be removed from the one to the other.

The judges of this tribunal are appointed partly by the Emperor, partly by electors, partly by circles, and are supported by all the states of the empire, excepting the Emperor. They are badly paid, though great salaries are annexed to their offices.

In every action real or personal, the diet, imperial chamber, and Aulic Council are so many supreme courts, to which none of the states can demur. The jurisprudence by which they govern themselves, is, according to the subject matter, 1. The provincial laws of Germany. 2. The Scripture. 3. The Roman law. 4. The canon law. 5. The feudal law.

Members of the diet as such are subject in all public affairs to be judged by the Emperor and diet. As individuals in their private capacity they are subject to the Aulic Council and imperial chamber.

The members have reserved to themselves the right,

1. To enter into war and peace with foreign powers.

2. To enter into alliances with foreign powers, or with one another, not prejudicial to their engagements to the empire.

3. To make laws, levy taxes, raise troops, and determine on life and death.

4. To coin money.

5. To exert territorial sovereignty within their limits in their own name.

6. To grant pardons.

7. To furnish their quotas of troops, equipped, mounted, and armed, and to provide for the sustenance of them, as if they served at home.

The members of the empire are restricted,

1. From entering into confederacies prejudicial to the Emperor.

2. From laying tolls or customs upon bridges, rivers, or passages to which strangers are subject, without consent of the Emperor in full diet.

3. From giving any other value to money, or making any other kind of money, than what is allowed by the empire.

4. From taking arms against another, from doing themselves justice, from affording a retreat, much more assistance, to infractors of the public peace; the ban of the empire being denounced against the transgressors of these prohibitions, besides a fine of two thousand marks of gold and the loss of regalities.

The Emperor has the prerogative,

1. Of exclusively making propositions to the diet.

2. Of presiding in all assemblies and tribunals of the empire when he chooses.

3. Of giving suffrage in all affairs treated in the diet.

4. Of negativing their resolutions.

6. Of issuing them in his own name.

6. Of watching over the safety of the empire.

7. Of naming ambassadors to negotiate within the empire, as well as at foreign courts, affairs concerning the Germanic corps.

8. Of reëstablishing in good fame, persons dishonored by councils of war and civil tribunals.

9. Of giving investiture of the principal immediate fiefs of the empire, which is not indeed of much consequence.

10. Of conferring vacant electorates.

11. Of preventing subjects from being withdrawn from the jurisdiction of their proper judges.

12. Of conferring charges of the empire.

13. Of conferring dignities and titles, as of kings, &c.

14. Of instituting military orders.

15. Of granting the *dernier resort.*

16. Of judging differences and controversies touching tolls.

17. Of deciding contests between Catholic and Protestant states, touching precedence, &c.

18. Of founding universities within the lands of the states, so far as to make the person endowed with academic honors therein to be regarded as such throughout Germany.

19. Of granting all sorts of privileges not injurious to the states of the empire.

20. Of establishing great fairs.

21. Of receiving the *droit des ponts générales.*

22. Of striking money, but without augmenting or diminishing its value.

23. Of permitting strangers to enlist soldiers conformably to the *recess* of 1654.

24. Of receiving and applying the revenues of the empire.

He cannot make war, or peace, or laws, nor lay taxes, nor alter the denomination of money, nor weights, or measures.

The Emperor, as such, does not properly possess any territory within the empire, nor derive any revenue for his support.

Vices of the Constitution.

1. The quotas are complained of, and are supplied very irregularly and defectively. Provision is made by a decree of the diet for enforcing them, but it is a delicate matter to execute it against the powerful members.

2. The establishment of the Imperial Chamber has not been proved an efficient remedy against civil wars. It has committed faults. The *ressortissans* have not always been docile.

3. Although the establishment of the Imperial Chamber &c. give a more regular form to the police of the fiefs, it is not to be supposed they are capable of giving a certain force to the laws and maintaining the peace of the empire, if the House of Austria had not acquired force enough to maintain itself on the imperial throne, to make itself respected, and to give orders, which it might be imprudent to despise, as the laws were theretofore despised.

Jealousy of the imperial authority seems to have been a great cement of the confederacy.

No. V. p. 254.

EXTRACTS FROM GENERAL WASHINGTON'S DIARY.

May 9th, 1787. — Crossed from Mount Vernon to Mr. Digges's a little after sun-rise, and, pursuing the route by the way of Baltimore, dined at Mr. Richard Henderson's in Bladensburg, and lodged at Major Snowden's, where, feeling very severely a violent headache and sick stomach, I went to bed early.

10*th*. — A very great appearance of rain in the morning, and a little falling, induced me, though well recovered, to wait till about eight o'clock before I set off. At one o'clock I arrived at Baltimore; dined at the Fountain Inn, and supped and lodged at Dr. McHenry's; rain in the evening.

11*th*. — Set off before breakfast; rode twelve miles to Skirrett's;

baited there, and proceeded without halting (weather threatening) to the ferry at Havre de Grace, where I dined, but could not cross, the wind being turbulent and squally. Lodged there.

12*th.* — With difficulty, on account of the wind, crossed the Susquehanna. Breakfasted at the ferry-house on the east side. Dined at the Head of Elk (Hollingsworth's tavern), and lodged at Wilmington. At the Head of Elk I was overtaken by Mr. Francis Corbin, who took a seat in my carriage.

13*th.* — About eight o'clock Mr. Corbin and myself set out, and dined at Chester (Mr. Wilky's), where I was met by Generals Mifflin (now speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly), Knox, and Varnum, Colonels Humphreys and Menges, and Majors Jackson and Nicholas, with whom I proceeded to Philadelphia. At Gray's Ferry the city light-horse, commanded by Colonel Miles, met me, and escorted me in; and the artillery officers, who stood arranged, saluted me as I passed. Alighted through a crowd at Mr. House's; but being again warmly and kindly pressed by Mr. and Mrs. Robbert Morris to lodge with them, I did so, and had my baggage removed thither. Waited on the president, Dr. Franklin,* as soon as I got to town. On my arrival the bells were chimed.

14*th.* — This being the day appointed for the convention to meet, such members as were in town assembled at the State-house; but only two States being represented, namely, Virginia and Pennsylvania, agreed to attend at the same place at eleven o'clock to-morrow. Dined in a family way at Mr. Morris's.

15*th.* — Repaired at the hour appointed to the State-house; but no more States being represented than yesterday, though several more members had come in, we agreed to meet again to-morrow. Governor Randolph from Virginia came in to-day. Dined with the members of the general meeting of the Society of the Cincinnati.

16*th.* — No more than two States being yet represented, agreed, till a quorum of them should be formed, to alter the hour of meeting at the State-house to one o'clock. Dined at the president Dr. Franklin's, and drank tea and spent the evening at Mr. John Penn's.

17*th.* — Mr. Rutledge from Charleston, and Mr. Charles Pinckney from Congress, having arrived, gave a representation to South Carolina; and Colonel Mason, getting in this evening, placed all the delegates from Virginia on the floor of the convention. Dined at Mr. Powel's and drank tea there.

18*th.* — The representation from New York appeared on the

* President of Pennsylvania.

floor to-day. Dined at Gray's Ferry, and drank tea at Mr. Morris's; after which accompanied Mrs. Morris and some other ladies to hear a Mrs. O'Connell read. The lady, being reduced in circumstances, had recourse to this expedient to obtain a little money. Her performance was tolerable; at the College Hall.

19*th.* — No more States represented. Dined at Mr. Ingersoll's; spent the evening at my lodgings, and retired to my room soon.

20*th.* — Dined with Mr. and Mrs. Morris and other company at their farm, called the Hills; returned in the afternoon and drank tea at Mr. Powel's.

21*st.* — Delaware State was represented. Dined and drank tea at Mr. Bingham's in great splendor.

22*d.* — The representation from North Carolina was completed, which made a representation for five States. Dined and drank tea at Mr. Morris's.

23*d.* — No more States being represented, I rode to General Mifflin's to breakfast; after which in company with him, Mr. Madison, Mr. Rutledge, and others, I crossed the Schuylkill above the Falls; visited Mr. Peters's, Mr. Penn's seat, and Mr. William Hamilton's. Dined at Mr. Chew's with the wedding guests (Colonel Howard of Baltimore having married his daughter Peggy.) Drank tea there in a very large circle of ladies.

24*th.* — No more States represented. Dined and drank tea at Mr. John Ross's. One of my postillion boys (Paris) being sick, requested Dr. Jones to attend him.

25*th.* — Another delegate coming in from the State of New Jersey, gave it a representation, and increased the number to seven, which forming a quorum of the thirteen, the members present resolved to organize the body; when, by a unanimous vote, I was called up to the chair as president. Major William Jackson was appointed secretary; and a committee was chosen, consisting of three members, to prepare rules and regulations for conducting the business; and, after appointing door-keepers, the convention adjourned till Monday, to give time to the committee to report the matter referred to them. Returned many visits to-day. Dined at Mr. Thomas Willing's, and spent the evening at my lodgings.

26*th.* — Returned all my visits this forenoon. Dined with a club at the City Tavern, and spent the evening at my quarters writing letters.

27*th.* — Went to the Romish church to high mass. Dined, drank tea, and spent the evening at my lodgings.

28*th.* — Met in convention at ten o'clock. Two States more,

namely, Massachusetts and Connecticut, were on the floor to-day. Established rules, agreeably to the plan brought in by the committee for the government of the convention, and adjourned. Dined at home, and drank tea in a large circle at Mr. Francis's.

29th. — Attended convention, and dined at home; after which accompanied Mrs. Morris to the benefit concert of a Mr. Juhan.

30th. — Attended convention; dined with Mr. Vaughan; drank tea, and spent the evening at a Wednesday evening's party at Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence's.

31st. — The State of Georgia came on the floor of the convention to-day, which made a representation of ten States. Dined at Mr. Francis's, and drank tea with Mrs. Meredith.

June 1st. — Attending in convention; and, nothing being suffered to transpire, no minutes of the proceedings have been, or will be, inserted in this diary. Dined with Mr. John Penn, and spent the evening at a superb entertainment at Bush-Hill given by Mr. Hamilton, at which were more than a hundred guests.

2d. — Major Jenifer coming in, with sufficient powers for the purpose, gave a representation to Maryland; which brought all the States in the Union into convention, except Rhode Island, which had refused to send delegates. Dined at the City Tavern with the club, and spent the evening at my own quarters.

September 17th. — Met in convention, when the constitution received the unanimous assent of eleven States, and of Colonel Hamilton from New York, the only delegate from thence in convention, and was subscribed to by every member present, except Governor Randolph and Colonel Mason from Virginia, and Mr. Gerry from Massachusetts. The business being thus closed, the members adjourned to the City Tavern, dined together, and took a cordial leave of each other. After which I returned to my lodgings, did some business with, and received the papers from, the secretary of the convention, and retired to meditate on the momentous work, which had been executed, after not less than five, for a large part of the time six, and sometimes seven hours' sitting every day, (except Sundays and the ten days' adjournment to give a committee an opportunity and time to arrange the business,) for more than four months.

No. VI. p. 269.

MR. MADISON'S REMARKS ON THE CONSTITUTION, AND REPLY TO GEORGE MASON'S OBJECTIONS.

JAMES MADISON TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

New York, 30 September, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I found on my arrival here, that certain ideas unfavorable to the act of the convention, which had created difficulties in that body, had made their way into Congress. They were patronized chiefly by Mr. R. H. L.,* and Mr. Dane of Massachusetts. It was first urged, that, as the new constitution was more than an alteration of the articles of confederation, under which Congress acted, and even subverted these articles altogether, there was a constitutional impropriety in their taking any positive agency in the work. The answer given was, that the resolution of Congress in February had recommended the convention as the best means of obtaining a firm *national government*; that, as the powers of the convention were defined by their commissions in nearly the same terms with the powers of Congress given by the confederation, on the subject of alterations, Congress were not more restrained from acceding to the new plan, than the convention were from proposing it.

If the plan was within the powers of the convention, it was within those of Congress; if beyond those powers, the same necessity, which justified the convention, would justify Congress; and a failure of Congress to concur in what was done would imply, either that the convention had done wrong in exceeding their powers, or that the government proposed was in itself liable to insuperable objections; that such an inference would be the more natural, as Congress had never scrupled to recommend measures foreign to their constitutional functions, whenever the public good seemed to require it; and had in several instances, particularly in the establishment of the new western governments, exercised assumed powers of a very high and delicate nature, under motives infinitely less urgent than the present state of our affairs, if any faith were due to the representations made by Congress themselves, echoed by twelve States in the Union, and confirmed by the general voice of the people.

An attempt was made in the next place by R. H. L. to amend

* Richard Henry Lee.

the act of the convention before it should go forth from Congress. He proposed a bill of rights, provision for juries in civil cases, and several other things corresponding with the ideas of Colonel Mason. He was supported by Mr. Melancton Smith of this State. It was contended, that Congress had an undoubted right to insert amendments, and that it was their duty to make use of it in a case where the essential guards of liberty had been omitted. On the other side, the right of Congress was not denied, but the inexpediency of exerting it was urged on the following grounds. 1. That every circumstance indicated, that the introduction of Congress as a party to the reform was intended by the States merely as a matter of form and respect. 2. That it was evident from the contradictory objections, which had been expressed by the different members, who had animadverted on the plan, that a discussion of its merits would consume much time, without producing agreement even among its adversaries. 3. That it was clearly the intention of the States, that the plan to be proposed should be the act of the convention with the assent of Congress, which could not be the case if alterations were made, the convention being no longer in existence to adopt them. 4. That as the act of the convention when altered, would instantly become the mere act of Congress, and must be proposed by them as such, and of course be addressed to the legislatures, not conventions of the States, and require the ratification of thirteen instead of nine States, and as the unaltered act would go forth to the States directly from the convention under the auspices of that body, some States might ratify one, and some the other of the plans, and confusion and disappointment be the least evils that could ensue.

These difficulties, which at one time threatened a serious division in Congress, and popular alterations with the yeas and nays on the journals, were at length fortunately terminated by the following resolution; "Congress, having received the report of the convention lately assembled in Philadelpia, resolve *unanimously*, that the said report, with the resolution and letter accompanying the same, be transmitted to the several legislatures, in order to be submitted to a convention of delegates chosen in each State by the people thereof, in conformity to the resolves of the convention made and provided in that case." Eleven States were present; the absent ones Rhode Island and Maryland. A more direct approbation would have been of advantage in this and some other States, where stress will be laid on the agency of Congress in the matter, and a handle taken by adversaries of any ambiguity on the subject. With

regard to Virginia, and some other States, reserve on the part of Congress will do no injury. The circumstance of unanimity must be favorable everywhere.

The general voice of this city seems to espouse the new constitution. It is supposed, nevertheless, that the party in power is strongly opposed to it. The country must finally decide, the sense of which is as yet wholly unknown. As far as Boston and Connecticut have been heard from, the first impression seems to be auspicious. I am waiting with anxiety for the echo from Virginia, but with very faint hopes of its corresponding with my wishes. With every sentiment of respect and esteem, I am, &c.

JAMES MADISON.

GEORGE MASON'S OBJECTIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION.

There is no declaration of rights; and, the laws of the general government being paramount to the laws and constitutions of the several States, the declarations of rights in the separate States are no security. Nor are the people secured even in the enjoyment of the benefits of the common law; which stands here upon no other foundation, than its having been adopted by the respective acts forming the constitutions of the several States.

In the House of Representatives there is not the substance, but the shadow only, of representation; which can never produce proper information in the legislature, nor inspire confidence in the people. The laws will therefore be generally made by men little concerned in, and unacquainted with, their effects and consequences.*

The Senate have the power of altering all money bills, and of originating appropriations of money, and the salaries of the officers of their own appointment, in conjunction with the President of the United States; although they are not the representatives of the people, or amenable to them.

These, with their other great powers (namely, their power in the appointment of ambassadors and all public officers, in making treaties, and in trying all impeachments), their influence upon and connexion with the Supreme Executive from these causes, their duration of office, and their being a constant existing body almost continually sitting, joined with their being one complete branch of

* "This objection has been in some degree lessened by an amendment, often before refused, and at last made by an erasure, after the engrossment upon parchment, of the word *forty* and inserting *thirty*, in the third clause of the second section of the first Article." — *Note in the original Paper.*

the legislature, will destroy any balance in the government, and enable them to accomplish what usurpations they please upon the rights and liberties of the people.

The judiciary of the United States is so constructed and extended, as to absorb and destroy the judiciaries of the several States; thereby rendering law as tedious, intricate, and expensive, and justice as unattainable by a great part of the community as in England, and enabling the rich to oppress and ruin the poor.

The President of the United States has no constitutional council (a thing unknown in any safe and regular government). He will therefore be unsupported by proper information and advice; and will generally be directed by minions and favorites; or he will become a tool to the Senate; or a council of state will grow out of the principal officers of the great departments, the worst and most dangerous of all ingredients for such a council in a free country; for they may be induced to join in any dangerous or oppressive measures to shelter themselves, and prevent an inquiry into their own misconduct in office. Whereas, had a constitutional council been formed (as was proposed) of six members, namely, two from the eastern, two from the middle, and two from the southern States, to be appointed by vote of the States in the House of Representatives, with the same duration and rotation of office as the Senate, the Executive would always have had safe and proper information and advice, the president of such a council might have acted as vice-president of the United States, *pro tempore*, upon any vacancy or disability of the chief magistrate; and long-continued sessions of the Senate would in a great measure have been prevented.

From this fatal defect of a constitutional council has arisen the improper power of the Senate in the appointment of public officers, and the alarming dependence and connexion between that branch of the legislature and the supreme executive. Hence also sprang that unnecessary and dangerous officer, the Vice-President; who, for want of other employment, is made president of the Senate, thereby dangerously blending the executive and legislative powers, besides always giving to some one of the States an unnecessary and unjust preëminence over the others.

The President of the United States has the unrestrained power of granting pardons for treason; which may be sometimes exercised to screen from punishment those, whom he had secretly instigated to commit the crime, and thereby prevent a discovery of his own guilt.

By declaring all treaties supreme laws of the land, the Executive and the Senate have in many cases an exclusive power of legislation; which might have been avoided by proper distinctions with respect to treaties, and requiring the assent of the House of Representatives, where it could be done with safety.

By requiring only a majority to make all commercial and navigation laws, the five southern States (whose produce and circumstances are totally different from those of the eight northern and eastern States) will be ruined; for such rigid and premature regulations may be made, as will enable the merchants of the northern and eastern States, not only to demand an exorbitant freight, but to monopolize the purchase of the commodities at their own price for many years, to the great injury of the landed interest and impoverishment of the people; and the danger is the greater, as the gain on one side will be in proportion to the loss on the other. Whereas requiring two thirds of the members present in both Houses would have produced mutual moderation, promoted the general interest, and removed an insuperable objection to the adoption of the government.

Under their own construction of the general clause at the end of the enumerated powers, the Congress may grant monopolies in trade and commerce, constitute new crimes, inflict unusual and severe punishments, and extend their power as far as they shall think proper; so that the State legislatures have no security for the powers now presumed to remain to them, nor the people for their rights.

There is no declaration of any kind for preserving the liberty of the press, the trial by jury in civil causes, nor against the danger of standing armies in time of peace.

The State legislatures are restrained from laying export duties on their own produce.

The general legislature is restrained from prohibiting the further importation of slaves for twenty odd years; though such importations render the United States weaker, more vulnerable, and less capable of defence.

Both the general legislature and the State legislatures are expressly prohibited from making *ex post facto* laws; though there never was, nor can be, a legislature but must and will make such laws, when necessity and the public safety require them; which will hereafter be a breach of all the constitutions in the Union, and afford precedents for other innovations.

This government will commence in a moderate aristocracy;

it is at present impossible to foresee whether it will in its operation produce a monarchy, or a corrupt oppressive aristocracy; it will most probably vibrate some years between the two, and then terminate in the one or the other.

JAMES MADISON TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

New York, 18 October, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I have been this day honored with your favor of the 10th instant, under the same cover with which is a copy of Colonel Mason's Objections to the work of the convention. As he persists in the temper, which produced his dissent, it is no small satisfaction to find him reduced to such distress for a proper gloss on it; for no other consideration surely could have led him to dwell on an objection, which he acknowledged to have been in some degree removed by the convention themselves; on the paltry right of the Senate to propose alterations in money bills; on the appointment of the Vice-President as president of the Senate, instead of making the president of the Senate the Vice-President, which seemed to be the alternative; and on the *possibility*, that the Congress may misconstrue their powers, and betray their trust, so far as to grant monopolies in trade, &c. If I do not forget, too, some of his other reasons were either not at all or very faintly urged at the time, when alone they ought to have been urged; such as the power of the Senate in the case of treaties and impeachments, and their duration in office. With respect to the latter point, I recollect well, that he more than once disclaimed opposition to it. My memory fails me, also, if he did not acquiesce in, if he did not vote for, the term allowed for the further importation of slaves, and the prohibition of duties on exports by the States.

What he means by the dangerous tendency of the judiciary, I am at some loss to comprehend. It never was intended, nor can it be supposed, that in ordinary cases the inferior tribunals will not have final jurisdiction in order to prevent the evils of which he complains. The great mass of suits in every State lie between citizen and citizen, and relate to matters not of federal cognizance. Notwithstanding the stress laid on the necessity of a council to the President, I strongly suspect, though I was a friend to the thing, that, if such a one as Colonel Mason proposed had been established, and the power of the Senate in appointments to offices been transferred to it, as great a clamor would have been heard from some quarters, which in general echo his objections.

What can he mean by saying, that the common law is not secured by the new constitution, though it has been adopted by the State constitutions? The common law is nothing more than the unwritten law, and is left by all the constitutions equally liable to legislative alterations. I am not sure that any notice is particularly taken of it in the constitutions of the States. If there is, nothing more is provided than a general declaration, that it shall continue along with other branches of law to be in force till legally changed. The constitution of Virginia, drawn up by Colonel Mason himself, is absolutely silent on the subject. An *ordinance*, passed during the same session, declared the common law as heretofore, and all statutes of prior date to the fourth of James the First, to be still the law of the land, merely to obviate pretexts, that the separation from Great Britain threw us into a state of nature, and abolished all civil rights and obligations.

Since the revolution, every State has made great inroads, and with great propriety, in many instances, on this *monarchical* code. The "revisal of the laws" by a committee, of which Colonel Mason was a member, though not an acting one, abounds with such innovations. The abolition of the *right of primogeniture*, which I am sure Colonel Mason does not disapprove, falls under this head. What could the convention have done? If they had in general terms declared the common law to be in force, they would have broken in upon the legal code of every State in the most material points; they would have done more, they would have brought over from Great Britain a thousand heterogeneous and anti-republican doctrines, and even the *ecclesiastical hierarchy* itself, for that is a part of the common law. If they had undertaken a discrimination, they must have formed a digest of laws instead of a constitution. This objection surely was not brought forward in the convention, or it would have been placed in such a light, that a repetition of it out of doors would scarcely have been hazarded. Were it allowed the weight, which Colonel Mason may suppose it deserves, it would remain to be decided, whether it be candid to arraign the convention for omissions, which were never suggested to them, or prudent to vindicate his dissent by reasons, which either were not previously thought of, or must have been wilfully concealed. But I am running into a comment as prolix as it is out of place.

I find, by a letter from the chancellor (Mr. Pendleton), that he views the act of the convention in its true light, and gives it his unequivocal approbation. His support will have great effect. The accounts we have here of some other respectable characters vary

considerably. Much will depend on Mr. Henry, and I am glad to find by your letter, that his favorable decision on the subject may yet be hoped for. The newspapers here begin to teem with vehement and virulent calumniations of the proposed government; as they are chiefly borrowed from the Pennsylvania papers, you see them of course. The reports, however, from different quarters continue to be rather flattering. With the highest respect and sincerest attachment, I am, &c.

JAMES MADISON.

No. VII. pp. 428, 432, 443.

LETTERS FROM MADISON, LEE, AND LINCOLN, ON THE LOCATION OF THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT, CHOICE OF THE PRESIDENT, AND OTHER TOPICS.

FROM JAMES MADISON TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

New York, 24 August, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I was yesterday favored with yours of the 17th and 18th, under the same cover with the papers from Mr. Pleasants. The circular letter from this State is certainly a matter of as much regret, as the unanimity with which it passed is matter of surprise. I find it is everywhere, and particularly in Virginia, laid hold of as the signal for united exertions in pursuit of early amendments. In Pennsylvania the antifederal leaders are, I understand, soon to have a meeting at Harrisburg, in order to concert proper arrangements on the part of that State. I begin now to accede to the opinion, which has been avowed for some time by many, that the circumstances involved in the ratification of New York will prove more injurious than a rejection would have done. The latter would have rather alarmed the well-meaning antifederalists elsewhere, would have had no ill effect on the other party, would have excited the indignation of the neighbouring States, and would have been necessarily followed by a speedy reconsideration of the subject.

I am not able to account for the concurrence of the federal part of the convention in the circular address, on any other principle than the determination to purchase an immediate ratification in any form and at any price, rather than disappoint this city of a chance for the new Congress. This solution is sufficiently justified by the

eagerness displayed on this point, and the evident disposition to risk and sacrifice every thing to it. Unfortunately the disagreeable question continues to be undecided, and is now in a state more perplexing than ever. By the last vote taken, the whole arrangement was thrown out, and the departure of Rhode Island and the refusal of North Carolina to participate further in the business have left eleven States only to take it up anew. In this number there are not seven States for any place, and the disposition to relax, as usually happens, decreases with the progress of the contest. What and when the issue is to be, is really more than I can foresee. It is truly mortifying, that the outset of the new government should be immediately preceded by such a display of locality, as portends the continuance of an evil which has dishonored the old, and gives countenance to some of the most popular arguments, which have been inculcated by the southern antifederalists.

New York has appeared to me extremely objectionable* on the following grounds. It violates too palpably the *simple and obvious* principle, that the seat of public business *should* be made as equally convenient to every part of the public, as the requisite accommodations for executing the business will permit. This consideration has the more weight, as well on account of the catholic spirit possessed by the constitution, as of the increased resort, which it will require from every quarter of the continent. It seems to be particularly essential, that an eye should be had in all our public arrangements to the accommodation of the western country, which perhaps cannot be sufficiently gratified at any rate, but which might be furished with new fuel to its jealousy by being summoned to the sea-shore, and almost at one end of the continent. There are reasons, but of too confidential a nature for any other than verbal communication, which make it of critical importance, that neither cause nor pretext should be given for distrusts, in that quarter, of the policy towards it in this. I have apprehended, also, that a preference so favorable to the eastern States would be represented in the southern as a decisive proof of the preponderance of that scale, and a justification of all the antifederal arguments drawn from that danger. Adding to all this the recollection, that the first year or two will produce all the great arrangements under the new system, and which may fix its tone for a long time to come, it seems of real importance that the temporary residence of the new Congress, apart from its relation to the final residence, should not be

* As a place for the meeting of Congress.

thrown too much towards one extremity of the Union. It may perhaps be the more necessary to guard against suspicions of partiality in this case, as the early measures of the new government, including a navigation act, will of course be most favorable to this extremity.

But I own that I am much influenced by a view to the final residence, which I conceive more likely to be properly chosen in Philadelphia than in New York. The extreme eccentricity of the latter will certainly, in my opinion, bring on a premature and consequently an improper choice. This policy is avowed by some of the sticklers for this place, and is known to prevail with the bulk of them. People from the interior parts of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky will never patiently repeat their trips to this remote situation, especially as the legislative sessions will be held in the winter season. Should no other consequence take place, than a frequent or early agitation of this contentious subject, it would form a strong objection against New York.

Were there reason to fear a repugnance to the establishment of a final seat, or a choice of a commercial city for the purpose, I should be strongly tempted to shun Philadelphia at all events. But my only fear on the first head is of a precipitancy in carrying that part of the federal constitution into effect; and, on the second, the public sentiment, as well as other considerations, is so fixedly opposed as to banish the danger from my apprehensions. Judging from my own experience on this subject, I conclude, that from motives of one sort or another, ten States at least, that is, five from each end of the Union, to say nothing of the western States, will at any proper time be ready to remove from Philadelphia. The only difficulty that can arise will be that of agreeing on the place to be finally removed to; and it is from that difficulty alone, and the delay incident to it, that I derive my hope in favor of the banks of the Potomac. There are some other combinations on this subject, into which the discussion of it has led me, but I have already troubled you with more, I fear, than may deserve your attention. I am, &c.

JAMES MADISON.

HENRY LEE TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

New York, 13 September, 1788.

MY DEAR GENERAL,

At length the new government has received the last act necessary to its existence. This day Congress passed the requisite previous arrangements. The first Wednesday in January the ratifying

States are to appoint electors; on the first Wednesday in February the President is to be chosen; and the first Wednesday in March is the time, and this city the place, for commencing proceedings.

Some delay has attended this business from a difference in opinion respecting the place of meeting, but this delay has not in the least affected the sooner or later operation of the constitution. The southern gentlemen did not accord in the place of temporary residence, from a discordance in sentiment of its effect on the establishment of the permanent seat of government. Some considered this city, others a more southern position, as the most favorable theatre to negotiate the determination of the ten miles square. Many plausible and some cogent reasons are adducible in support of either opinion, and time only can show which is founded in propriety.

The solemnity of the moment, and its application to yourself, has fixed my mind in contemplations of a public and a personal nature; and I feel an involuntary impulse, which I cannot resist, of communicating without reserve to you some of the reflections which the hour has produced. Solicitous for our common happiness as a people, and convinced, as I continue to be, that our peace and prosperity depend on the proper improvement of the present period, my anxiety is extreme that the new government may have an auspicious beginning. To effect this, and to perpetuate a nation formed under your auspices, it is certain that again you will be called forth.

The same principles of devotion to the good of mankind, which have invariably governed your conduct, will, no doubt, continue to rule your mind, however opposite their consequences may be to your repose and happiness. It may be wrong, but I cannot suppress, in my wishes for national felicity, due regard to your personal fame and content.

If the same success should attend your efforts on this important occasion, which has distinguished you hitherto, then to be sure you will have spent a life, which Providence rarely, if ever, gave to the lot of one man. It is my belief, it is my anxious hope, that this will be the case, but all things are uncertain, and perhaps nothing more than political events. The new government, though about to commence its proceedings, and received by a large majority of the people with unprecedented unanimity and attachment, must encounter, from the nature of human affairs, many difficulties. These obstacles to its harmonious progress will receive additional weight and influence from the active and enterprising characters, who con-

tinue to inflame the passions and to systematize the measures of opposition. The circular letter from this State seems to be the standard to which the various minorities will repair, and, if they should succeed in bringing quickly into action the objects of that letter, new and serious difficulties must arise, which will cross and may destroy the government in its infancy.

Much will depend on the part, which the Assembly of Virginia may adopt in this business, and from the complexion of that body little is to be hoped. They appeared to be generally opposed, and Mr. Henry with many other conventional coadjutors are members of the legislature. Madison will not be there, nor is there a friend to government in the Assembly of comparative ability. It would be fortunate if this gentleman could be introduced into that body, and I think it is practicable. Mr. Gordon, one of the Orange members, would readily vacate, to let him in, and the county would certainly elect him. In my letter of this date to Dr. Stuart I have mentioned this suggestion.

It would certainly be unpleasant to you, and obnoxious to all who feel for your past fame, to see you at the head of a tumbling system. It is a sacrifice on your part, insupportable in any point of view. But, on the other hand, no alternative seems to be presented. Without you the government can have but little chance of success, and the people of that happiness which its prosperity must yield. In this dilemma it seems wise, that such previous measures be in time adopted, as most promise to allay the fury of opposition, to defer amendments till experience has shown defects, and to insure the appointment of able and honest men in the first Congress.

One of the best means to accomplish this seems to me, to bring into the Assembly of Virginia the aid before mentioned. Indeed I know of nothing so effective; for on the conduct of Virginia every thing will depend. Her example will be followed; and, if she supports with promptitude the system recommended by this State, confusion and anarchy may be the substitutes of order and good government.

With much freedom have I disclosed to you, and to you only, my sentiments on the present epoch, as it involves in it yourself. I am persuaded you will attribute my conduct to the motives, which gave birth to it, zeal for the public prosperity and solicitude for your fame and happiness. In a few weeks I shall return to Virginia; if by land, I shall pay my respects to you at Mount Vernon, when

it will be more in my power to explain fully my opinions. I have the honor to be, with unalterable attachment, yours truly,

HENRY LEE.

JAMES MADISON TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

New York, 14 September, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

The delay in providing for the commencement of the government was terminated yesterday, by an acquiescence of the minor number in the persevering demands of the major. The time for choosing the electors is the first Wednesday in January, and for choosing the President the first Wednesday in February. The meeting of the government is to be the first Wednesday in March, and in the city of New York. The times were adjusted to the meetings of the State legislatures. The place was the result of the dilemma, to which the opponents of New York were reduced, *of yielding* to its advocates, or strangling the government *in its birth.*

The necessity of yielding, and the impropriety of further delay, have for some time been obvious to me, but others did not view the matter in the same light. Maryland and Delaware were absolutely inflexible. It has indeed been too apparent, that local and State considerations have very improperly predominated in this question, and that something more is aimed at than merely the first session of the government at this place. Every circumstance has shown, that the policy is to keep Congress here till a permanent seat be chosen, and to obtain a permanent seat at farthest not beyond the Susquehanna. New Jersey, by its legislature as well as its *delegation* in Congress, has clearly discovered her view to be a temporary appointment of New York, as affording the best chance of a permanent establishment at Trenton. I have been made so fully sensible of these views in the course of the business, as well as of the impropriety of so eccentric a position as New York, that I would have finally concurred in any place more southward, to which the eastern States would have acceded, and, previous to the definitive vote, a motion was made tendering a blank for that purpose. At any place south of the Delaware, the Susquehanna at least would have been secured, and a hope given to the Potomac. As the case is, I conceive the Susquehanna to be the utmost to be hoped for, with no small danger of being stopped at the Delaware. Besides this consequence, the decision will, I fear, be regarded as at once a proof of the preponderancy of the eastern strength, and of a disposition to make an unfair use of it. And it cannot but hap-

pen, that the question will be entailed on the new government, which will have enough of other causes of agitation in its councils.

The meeting at Harrisburg is represented by its friends as having been conducted with much harmony and moderation. Its proceedings are said to be in the press, and will of course soon be before the public. I find that all the mischief apprehended from Clinton's circular letter in Virginia will be verified. The antifederalists lay hold of it with eagerness, as the harbinger of a second convention; and, as the governor espouses the project, it will certainly have the coöperation of our Assembly.

I enclose a sensible little pamphlet, which falls within the plan of investigating and comparing the languages of the aboriginal Americans. With the sincerest attachment, I am, &c.

JAMES MADISON.

BENJAMIN LINCOLN TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

Hingham, 24 September, 1788.

I was, my dear General, a few days since in Boston, where I had the pleasure of receiving your favor of the 23d ultimo. The information, which your Excellency has received, respecting the machinations of the antifederal characters, appears, from what circulates in this part of the country, but too well founded. I have no doubt but every exertion will be made to introduce into the new government, in the first instance, characters unfriendly to those parts of it, which, in my opinion, are its highest ornaments and its most precious jewels. To this they will be induced from two considerations at the least. The first with a view totally to change the nature of the government immediately. But, should they fail of that, they will then have it in their power to introduce into all the important offices in government men of their own sentiments; so that in a short time by their influence they may bring about that change, which cannot at first or in any other way be effected by them.

Should these events take place, the situation of the federalists will be humiliating indeed. They will soon have the mortification of seeing, that all their exertions for establishing a government, for promoting the honor, and for securing the freedom and felicity of the people, have proved ineffectual; not only so, but they will find themselves buried in such obscurity, as to be totally unable to rise with that influence necessary to have any control over public men or public measures. Their only hope then can be, that, when the

government established shall be found insufficient to answer the great and interesting purposes, which it should embrace, and when the distresses of the people in consequence thereof are evinced by clamors and outrage against it, and things fall back into a state of confusion, they may possibly stand on a floor with others. A melancholy consideration, however, though the punishment suffered hereby would be but just, should this train of evils take place in consequence of our own indolence and inattention.

There never was an instance, when it could have been more necessary to call into exercise the wisdom, the prudence, and patriotism of the United States, than it will be in the important transactions of appointing the executive and the legislative branches of the new government. For the first impressions made therein will probably give a tone to all future measures.

We are happy here in finding it to be the unanimous voice of this rising empire, that your Excellency, who has so just a claim to the merit of its establishment, should now take it under your protection. The share you hold in the affections of the people, and the unlimited confidence they place in your integrity and judgment, give you an elevated stand among them, which no other man can, or probably ever will, command.* These things must insure to you all, which a susceptible mind can wish, a power of promoting in the highest degree the happiness of a virtuous and an enlightened country.

But will not these very important considerations alarm those antifederal characters before mentioned? They must know, that the influence you will have in the organization of the new government, and in enforcing the precepts of it, will embarrass their schemes, if not totally baffle them. Surely they must know, that these consequences will follow your acceptance of the important trust. We must therefore expect, and we should be guarded in every point to prevent, the influence of the intrigues and combinations of those, who wish to set every thing again afloat. They will endeavour, as one of the most probable means by which they can effect their purposes, to prevent your acceptance of the Presidency; your election they cannot hinder.

It seems to be the general voice, so far as I can obtain a knowl-

---

* Dr. Franklin said, nearly at the same time that the above was written; — "General Washington is the man that all our eyes are fixed on for *President*, and what little influence I may have is devoted to him." — *Letter to M. le Veillard, June 8th*, 1788.

edge of it, that Massachusetts may expect the Vice-President will be taken from this State. Governor Hancock and Mr. John Adams are considered as the candidates for that office. It is said that the Governor has publicly declared, that he would not accept it, should he be appointed to the office. I think he will not be very open in divulging this sentiment, though I am of opinion, that in some unguarded moment it might have escaped him; for he is, I am confident, flattered by his friends, that, from the nature of making the choice, he may possibly be the President. This, in the idea of some, is above all things to be deprecated; however, we need not be anxious; it cannot take place, for there certainly will be a division of the votes between Mr. Hancock and Mr. Adams. The latter in my opinion will be the man; for I cannot believe that the Governor would, under his present want of health, leave this government, even if he should be elected second in the new one.

I am prompted to wish, that Mr. Adams might come in, from the double motive, that, from his knowledge and rectitude he will be able to render the most essential services to the United States, and that with him your Excellency will be perfectly happy. I am however very apprehensive, that the antifederal junto will attempt from sinister views to prejudice your Excellency, and to fix in your mind the most unfavorable ideas of him; and they will endeavour to persuade you, that, the moment such a connexion shall take place, you must bid adieu to all hope of future happiness in public life. Perhaps these apprehensions are not well founded. I hope they are not; but, when it is considered how dangerous your administration must be to the views of that party, we cannot suppose that they will stick at any thing to prevent its taking place.

I am happy in knowing Mr. Adams; my acquaintance commenced with him early in life; few men can boast of equal abilities and information, and of so many virtues; his foibles are few. I am happy in knowing his sentiments of your Excellency; there is not a virtue in your character, which the most intimate of your friends have discovered, but it seems to be known and acknowledged by him. I am, from a free conversation with him, as well as from his general character, perfectly convinced, that there is not a man in this part of the confederacy, if one can be found through the whole of it, who would render your situation at the head of the government more agreeable, or who would make it more his study, that your administration should be honorable to yourself and permanently interesting to the people.

I have, my dear General, thus freely written from the fullest

conviction of duty, and in perfect confidence in your Excellency. I feel myself exceedingly interested to see such a government, as we want and need, established without loss of time. I have many motives to wish it, besides my regard for the general good. I hope yet to live and enjoy the blessings of it. I have a large rising family, who must share the fate of those about them; if things go well, they may be happy; if otherwise, they must partake in the common misery. I wish to see a government in existence and properly administered, that I may not suffer the sad mortification, which would take place, if, after all the toils, dangers, and sufferings of a long and distressing war, prosecuted for the purpose of warding off an impending blow, and of establishing our country in those rights to which it was justly entitled, the people should from any conduct of theirs lose those blessings, which to secure was the sole end of the important struggle. I have the honor, &c.

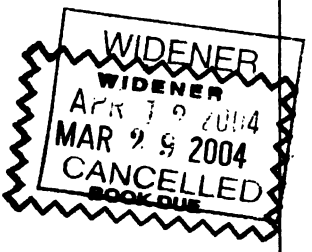
BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

END OF VOL. IX.

CAMBRIDGE:
CHARLES FOLSOM, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY.

3 2044 072 031 024

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.